

TOP STORY: The death of urban liberalism?

June 28-July 11, 1993

IN THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

FIELD of BAD DREAMS

Will officials wake
up to the
dangers of
electromagnetic
radiation?

Peter White reports
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EDITORIAL

CLINTON PREPARES HEALTH CARE DISASTER

President Clinton does not yet have a national health care plan, but it is already in trouble. The Task Force on National Health Care Reform, headed by Hillary Rodham Clinton, finished its work at the end of May, four weeks after the plan was originally scheduled for release. Now the administration is talking about a late-September unveiling, but it is no longer clear that the plan will be comprehensive. Despite the central role Clinton assigned to health care in his campaign and during his first weeks in office—and in the face of widespread popular demand for fundamental changes in our health care system—administration officials and Washington pundits are beginning to talk about “incremental improvements.”

The problem, as everybody now admits, is cost. The Task Force simply can't find the money to pay for all its proposed changes. Nonetheless, there is a way—even if it's the one reform the Clintons aren't considering: a government-financed health system. A 1991 report by the investigative wing of Congress concluded that a single-payer system would make comprehensive reform possible and save money at the same time. “If the universal coverage and single-payer features of the Canadian system were applied to the United States,” the General Accounting Office wrote, “the savings in administrative costs alone would be more than enough to finance insurance coverage for millions of Americans who are currently uninsured.”

Furthermore, there “would be enough left over to permit a reduction, or possibly even the elimination of co-payments and deductibles, if that were deemed appropriate.” No one has challenged the findings of this study.

Continuation of the private insurance system would not only be more costly than direct government payments to providers, it would also be far more complex. Under the Clinton model, insurance companies would compete against each other, which means that there would always

be tension between keeping costs down and providing high-quality service. This ever-present danger would necessitate constant monitoring by government agencies, further adding to administrative cost. If this federal supervision were relaxed, quality and extent of care would inevitably erode.

Then, too, workers with insurance now in effect under many union contracts have already given up wages to obtain full coverage. If those workers were now taxed to help pay for the president's plan—or if benefits were ratcheted down to “level the playing field for all employers”—they would in effect be suffering a substantial pay cut. And the unions that have supported Clinton's plan would suffer the consequences along with the administration.

It's clear that as the president tries to trim costs, comprehensive coverage is slipping as a priority of the Clinton plan. The president has called for a \$50 billion cut over five years in Medicare payments, and Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) has suggested additional reductions of \$35 billion. If these cuts were made, hospitals that had been expecting government funds to help pay for the uninsured would instead have their ability to provide care for low-income patients further undermined.

These and a myriad of other dilemmas posed by the Clinton plan spell higher costs or reduced benefits to health care consumers—and loss of popular political support for Clinton. The alternative would be to eliminate the insurance companies, which are the source of the major non-medical expense of the system. To do so would benefit businesses, big and small, as well as the many millions of Americans now uninsured, underinsured or threatened with the loss of insurance. But it would require an administration dedicated to principle and cognizant of the need to mobilize the American people in support of their own best interests. Unfortunately, the current administration fails on both counts.

FAREWELL, SHERYL LARSON

For 12 years, Sheryl Larson put together *In These Times*. More than anyone else on our staff, she shaped the news section of the publication. She planned most of our major investigative pieces, found and worked closely with our freelance writers and kept us on the cutting edge of the news. Now she has decided to move on—we hope to less harried and more fulfilling work. She will be missed not only by those of us who had the daily pleasure of her company, talent, wisdom and humor, but also by the many writers with whom she worked closely over the years. But she will not be forgotten. Her mark will remain with us as we try to build on her numerous accomplishments. ◀

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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(ISSN 0160-5992)

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 This issue (Vol. 17, No. 16) published June 28, 1993, for newsstand sales June 28-July 16, 1993.



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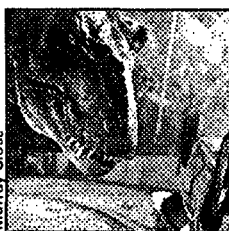


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LETTERS

Part of the Semitic world

Some astonishing statements were made in Henry Perril's letter (*ITT*, May 3). He wrote "in 1947 the United Nations proposed a binational state" for Palestine. Quite the opposite. The United Nations proposed partition. A democratic binational state was indeed proposed, but it was by the Socialist-Zionist Party Hashomer Hatzair in 1946. The binational state was to be based on cooperation and sharing, on political parity, between the Arabs living in Palestine and the Jews who had come, and were coming, from Europe. This proposal had considerable backing, but the mainstream Zionists refused to even consider it. They were determined to have their own state with total Jewish control. They accept-

ed partition. The Arabs refused, feeling that, as the great majority of the population and with their long history of living in Palestine, they were being robbed of their land by dividing it with newcomers.

It is interesting to speculate what would have developed with a truly democratic binational state of both Arabs and Jews. Most certainly there would have been many problems. But the ugliness and brutality of the continued military occupation of the Palestinian lands of the West Bank and Gaza would have been avoided, and so would the discriminatory second-class treatment of Arab citizens within the boundaries of Israel proper.

Perril says he "deplores the actions of Israeli extremists," that he "welcomes the Palestinian moderates" and that "without a viable state of peace" there can be only "disaster." I agree.

Israel lost the chance to make itself

an integral part of the Middle East at its inception. To do so would necessarily have meant reaching out to the Arabs as part of the Semitic world. But it is never too late to focus on that as a necessary goal. There can be no peace for Israel without a just solution of the rights of the Palestinians, which inevitably means that they must have their own state. As one with a long attachment to Israel and with great admiration and respect for their many dedicated and ethical people working in the cause of peace, I hope this will come about.

Mary Lindheim
Bolin, Calif.

Listen to Johnstone

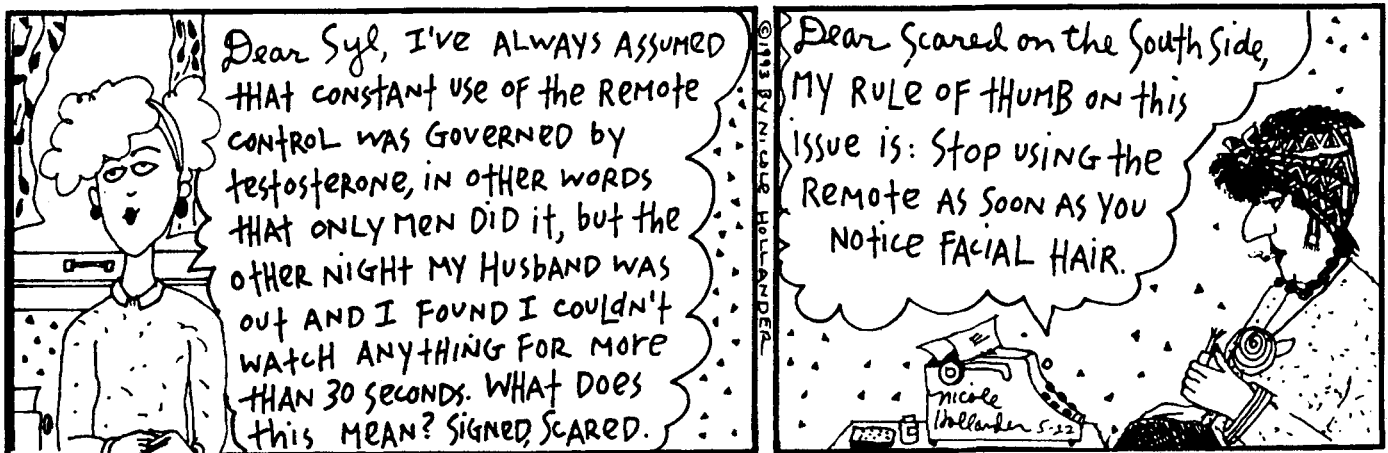
Kudos to Diana Johnstone for her article in your May 3 issue—a voice of sanity shouting loudly in the wilderness. The article should be widely disseminated, especially among those who have the power of action. They need her clarity to prevent them from embarking on a course that would widen the tragedy of war into the whole of Yugoslavia and beyond its borders.

I have long been convinced that the surest way to widen the conflict would be to enter it with guns blazing. Johnstone's cogent analysis provides the means to seek desperately needed guidance to a peaceful outcome.

Ted Savich
Wilmington, N.C.

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



Primary care

Your four articles on health care (April 19) accurately describe the politics of managed competition, but one ("Life in Health") inadvertently maligns the role of primary care physicians.

According to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, both runaway costs and inadequate access derive from the most unique aspect of the American health care system: its dominance by specialists. In every other developed country, 50 to 70 percent of physicians are generalists, while in the U.S. only 30 percent practice primary care (and this percentage is rapidly declining). Evidence recently published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* proves that general physicians provide the same quality care for much less. Specialists are addicted to the technologies of their discipline by their training and they prescribe their addiction as "quality care."

Marketplace mechanisms have been used to distribute health care resources since the turn of the century, so we have more people living in medically underserved rural and inner-city communities without access to any services now than those without access because they lack insurance. Both problems must be corrected.

No matter what the outcome of health care reform this year or next, all agree that we cannot solve our health care crisis without vastly strengthening primary care. Radical change will be required in medical education, specialty training and physician payment to correct the gross imbalance between generalists and specialists.

A.H. Strelnick, MD

Deputy Chair, Montefiore Medical Center
Bronx, N.Y.

Hoist with our OWN canard

In your April 19 editorial on health care you repeated the canard that South Africa and the United States are the only two industrialized nations

without socialized health care.

However, South Africa is not an industrialized Western country. It's a developing country with a per capita income closer to that of Brazil or Mexico, two countries whose social welfare systems are never compared to ours. Its First World cities, like those of Brazil, are surrounded by shantytowns. I believe South Africa's mistaken classification has roots in past efforts by apartheid rulers to proclaim their country an anti-communist bulwark and defender of Western values.

Though South Africa has vast resources, it's misleading to view it as a rich country; it's a middle-income country with a very skewed distribution of wealth. In his economic address on February 17, President Clinton got it right, citing the U.S. as "the only advanced nation" that did not provide such health care benefits. It may be tempting to use South Africa as a bogeyman. But on this issue, the U.S. stands alone.

Norman Oder
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Shared empathy

I share Joseph Levine's commitment to justice and peace between Israelis and Palestinians, but I question the efficacy of the approach in his March 22 letter.

It is very easy to list the atrocities of the Israeli occupation as Levine did. However, as long as such a litany is the sole point of analysis, it will be very easy for the Israeli right and the "pro-Israel" American lobby to counter and marginalize our voice. They, too, can pull out "facts," figures, stories and maps in the midst of some good pulls on the heartstrings of Jewish memory. And pretty soon rooms full of people (Jews and non-Jews) will shout "Never again!" and start beating the drum of Israeli self-righteousness.

Levine's letter fails to pre-empt the arguments of the right by acknowledging the complexity of the situation. More horror stories about Pales-

tinian suffering won't suffice. As true and as numerous as these stories may be, their impact is too easily undermined. The best way to argue for justice is to contextualize the conflict and the need for justice in the shared tragedy of the situation.

Adam Elan
Somerville, Mass.

Forward to the past

What century are we living in? I read with horror Fred Weir's article, "The kitchen counterrevolution" (ITT, March 23). It reminded me of *Handmaid's Tale*, with a new twist. Is this the new Russia under Yeltsin that our president is ready to bolster with billions of dollars in aid? Perhaps he could tie such an aid package to the Russians banning such blatantly sexist policies. It seems there are hidden costs associated with the Eastern bloc's conversion to capitalism. Just as the U.S. and the Soviet Union wasted untold billions "protecting" themselves from each other, so would they waste society's resources, human and economic, if educated women were forced back into the kitchen.

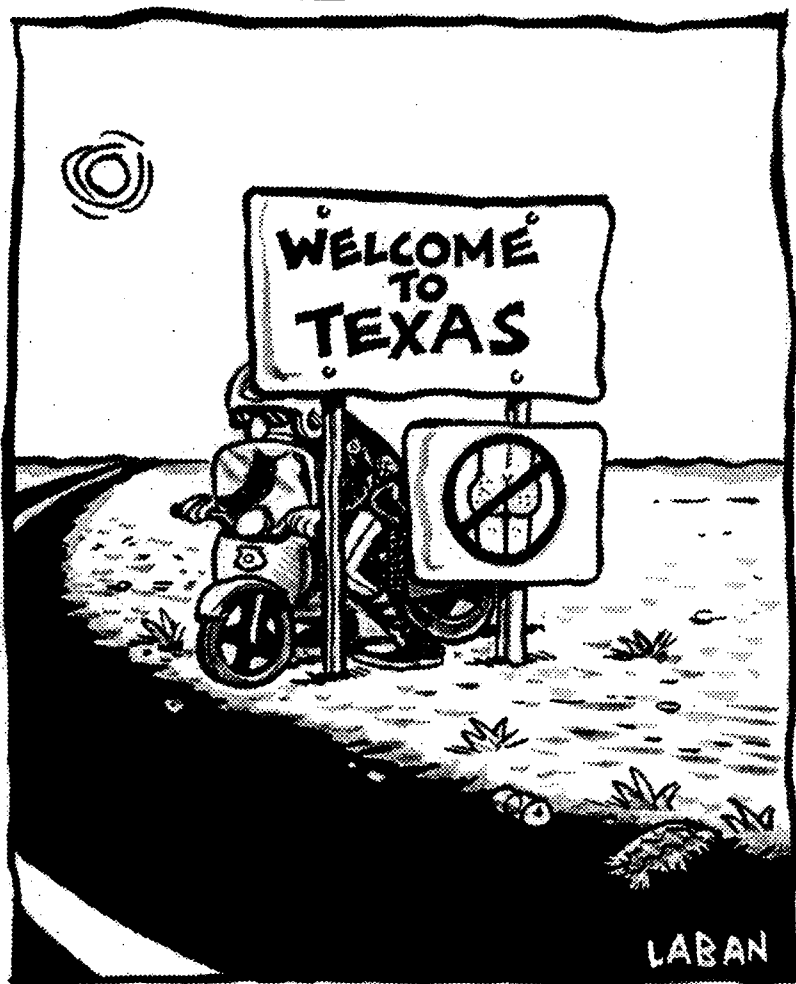
Perhaps the next real revolution will be led by women who have tasted freedom and are fed up with the junk food of the new "market" economy. Weir's article also points to our country's failure to foster true equality between the sexes. Great writing, chilling words.

Rachel Anne Goodman
Staunton, Va.



Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

InSHORT



ANAL ARGUMENTS

The Texas Legislature debates sodomy law

made evident in the Texas Legislature.

This year, that state's Senate and House of Representatives have been attempting to revise Texas' antiquated penal code. But in doing so, legislators have run up against the state's 113-year-old sodomy law banning oral and

When Bill Clinton attempted to eliminate the prohibition on gays serving in the military, he confronted one of society's most intractable prejudices. Just how deep-seated these sentiments are was recently



By Woody Igou

The spirit of '68 (flavors)

Two dozen high school students in Bellevue, Wash., set up a picket line outside Baskin-Robbins protesting the



company's decision to offer Quarterback Crunch ice cream only in the fall and not

in the summer. Said student Jeff Wolf, "It's oppression in the lowest form, mixed with high school students who have nothing to do." Better hurry up with that summer jobs program, Bill.

Metallica and Bart Simpson, OK, but...

United Auto Workers at an Illinois Caterpillar factory were arrested for "criminal trespass" during a rally in



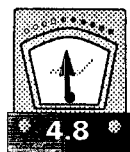
which many of them were wearing T-shirts urging the firing of company Chair-

man Donald Fites. On two earlier occasions union members were arrested for wearing similar T-shirts on company grounds. Although federal laws permit union activity on company property, a Caterpillar spokesman says the company "won't tol-

erect clothing intended to divide the work force." Not a right-to-wear state, apparently.

To each, according to his color...

Herb Caen reports in the *San Francisco Chronicle* that Bay Area resident Edward Pacheco received a letter from AT&T



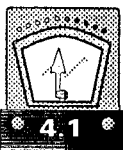
saying he could cash an enclosed \$75 check if he switched his long-distance

phone business. Later, he received a separate letter from AT&T written in Spanish that made the same offer to him but included a check for only \$25. Pacheco stated, "If I'm white, I get \$75; if I'm Mexican, I get \$25?"

A Free Trade Agreement preview.

Electrons don't sweat

In a recent book entitled *The Death of Money*, author Joel Kurtzman notes the follow-



ing troubling statistic: the total volume of transactions flowing through New York City

financial institutions on a daily basis is 50 times larger than the money generated by actual labor or products. Lo, a virtual economy.

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Weightless banality
2. Green Acres stupid
3. Malicious cretinism
4. Howard Sternesque
5. Mary Matalin mean
6. Gangrenous venality
7. A touch of evil
8. A cancer in the Zeitgeist
9. Et tu, Pol Pot?
10. Horseperson of the Apocalypse

anal sex between individuals of the same sex.

Last year, Texas' 3rd Court of Appeals struck down the law on the grounds that it violated the state constitution's guarantee of a right to privacy. "We can think of nothing more fundamentally private and deserving of protection than sexual behavior between consenting adults in private," the court declared.

In accordance with the court ruling, members of the state Senate voted this April to exclude the sodomy law from the new penal code. But this decision sparked a revolt in the Texas House. State Rep. Warren Chisum led a move to include a new law making both homosexual and heterosexual sodomy illegal. Chisum reasoned that a ban against all sodomy would be more likely to pass constitutional muster.

The debate over Chisum's amendment degenerated into an anatomical discussion over whether a man would be breaking the law if his penis slipped from a woman's vagina to her anus. A *Houston Chronicle* editorial accused Chisum and his allies of "wasting the taxpayers' valuable time trying to reap political gain from prejudice." But when the debate was over, Chisum's amendment passed 74 to 48.

On May 26, the Senate and House came up with a final version of the bill. Chisum's amendment was omitted, but so was the repeal of the state's original sodomy law, which is supposed to fine offending homosexuals \$200 but has never been enforced. According to the *Dallas Morning News*, Texas legislators were worried that they would be defeated in the next round of elections if they voted to repeal the sodomy law—even though the courts had ruled it unconstitutional.

—John B. Judis

GANG TIME

The gang truce summit draws more than the usual suspects

Organizers of the recent gang truce summit in Kansas City are setting up a number of follow-up meetings this summer. They're trying to take advantage of the momentum created by what the

Rev. Ben Chavis, the new head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), calls an "epochal" event.

Officially dubbed the National Summit for Peace and Urban Justice, the April 29-May 2 gathering attracted more than 300 participants spanning a surprisingly wide political and social spectrum. Not only were the usual suspects of radicals and black nationalists on hand to claim the gangbangers as their own, but the civil rights community was also in the mix. Along with Chavis—who was one of the summit's most ardent boosters—were Operation PUSH Executive Director Jeanette Wilson and the Rev. Randall Osborne of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Many gang member participants expressed surprise that so many of the old guard of black leadership were willing to confer such credibility on their effort. Expecting opposition, they instead received an official city welcome by Kansas City Mayor Emanuel Cleaver. Several churches in the city invited summit participants to address their congregations on the meeting's concluding day, and the event attracted news media from many points on the globe.

It was a weekend of credibility and celebrity, a heady experience for many. But was anything accomplished? The NAACP's Chavis thinks the summit made history, joining two forces in the black community that have long been at odds: the civil rights community/clergy and grass-roots street leadership.

"It was a total success," adds Wallace Bradley, a leader of Chicago's United

In Peace coalition and a summit organizer. (See *In These Times*, April 5.) "All the brothers got together and agreed on a contract and signed it. We discussed issues, we disagreed, we compromised, we reasoned together. All of those things were things we weren't used to doing, but we're learning fast."

The summit's final manifesto is a mixture of demands for federal job assistance, for ending police brutality and for more investment in urban education. It calls as well for increased self-reliance and for more responsive minority businesses.

For Marion Stamps, an organizer from Chicago's notorious Cabrini-Green housing project, the summit offered an opportunity to denounce what she called "the media showboating" of many participants. Stamps aggressively argued that the group should always include black women in any program of development for the African-American community. In fact, according to many participants, Stamps mounted an eloquent and effective feminist challenge to the patriarchal assumptions of the summit organizers.

For gang members who made the trip, the summit was a rare opportunity to exchange pleasantries with people they would have murdered but never known. For those 300 or so FBI agents who were reassigned from anti-Soviet counterintelligence to inner-city America to help police fight gangs and violence, it was an unprecedented concentration of potential perpetrators.

—Salim Muwakkil

SPIES ON-LINE

Computers keep tabs on American workers

Plugged in, booted up and logged on, more and more workers in the Information Age are finding out that Big Brother is no distant fiction. According to a recent issue of *Macworld*, employers "may view

employees on closed-circuit TV; tap their phones, e-mail, and network communications; and rummage through their computer files with or without employee consent—24 hours a day." Some 20 million American workers, including mail sorters, word processors and data-entry clerks, may be subject to electronic eavesdropping through their terminals.

Though employers use electronic monitoring in the name of productivity, studies show that it actually contributes to employee tension, anxiety, depression and other stress-related illnesses. According to a recent American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) report, workplace stress costs the U.S. an estimated \$50 billion in health care costs and reduced productivity.

"The technology keeps advancing and it keeps getting less expensive," said ACLU spokesperson Jonathan Anderson. "Without some kind of protective legislation, the problem will get worse."

Because of a loophole in the 1986 Electronic Communications Privacy Acts, employers have virtually unlimited rights to monitor workers. In May, Sen. Paul Simon (D-IL) introduced "The Privacy for Consumers and Workers Act," which would require employers to alert workers about possible monitoring and how the collected information might be used. It would also prohibit covert, periodic or random monitoring, including video surveillance in bathrooms and locker rooms.

Lewis Maltbe, director of the ACLU's Workplace Rights Office, has worked closely with Simon on the privacy bill. "It's a very reasonable and balanced attempt to protect employees without hamstringing employers," he said.

Simon introduced the bill in Congress by recounting a number of recent cases, including a lawsuit filed this year against the Sheraton Boston Hotel for secretly videotaping the male employee's changing room. When Sheraton

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

Infomercial from the boss

The once-banned, now-blooming infomercial—the long-form TV commercial—is now being used by management in contract negotiations. During negotiations between a Denver supermarket chain and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), the company bought TV time to air Ross Perot-like ads explaining management's side. The union had already done dueling 30-second ads, and did not respond. Future labor organizers may have to plan for infomercials.

Of course, neither broadcasters nor cablers have to give response time anymore, even if someone offers to pay for it. Newspapers never did. A UFCW organizer in New Jersey recently told the *Village Voice* that he couldn't place an ad in the *Newark Star-Ledger*. It, like many of its counterparts, depends on supermarket ads.

The what channel?

Fast on the heels of 500-cable-channel talk, entrepreneurs are coming up with new niche-marketed cable channels. Just in time for the latest cable trade show are: The Wellness Channel, The Golf Channel, The Military Channel (for war buffs), Advertising Television (infomercials), The Crime Channel (crime-related entertainment),

The Gaming Network (gambling from lotteries to dog racing), *The Game Show Channel*, *TV Macy's* (home shopping at Macy's), *Sega Channel* (video games and tips), *Romance Classics* (only the gooey movies) and *Z-Music* (Christian music videos).

There are also proposals for African-American-oriented channels, a channel for independent and student film work, and PBS's *Horizons TV*—imagined as a C-SPAN for culture.

Unfortunately for virtually all of them, the 500-channel universe is still a dream.

Some, according to *Broadcasting* magazine, believe that only 4 percent of cable systems will have the much-vaunted 500 channels by the year 2000. (The optimists say 40 percent.) Back in real life, many cable channels are actually cutting down their traditional offerings, while begrudgingly making room for broadcast channels that the Federal Communications Commission requires them to carry or pay for.

Signs of the times

Izvestia, once the incontrovertible voice of the Soviet government, has hired an ombudsman—a viewer's representative and internal investigator. Perhaps even more surprising, so has an American TV network: NBC News, which embarrassed itself last February with rigged footage of an exploding truck gas tank. According to *Editor and Publisher*, NBC is the first TV network to hire one.

© 1993 Pat Aufderheide

employee Franklin Etienne, who emigrated to the U.S. from Haiti, saw a tape of himself changing into his uniform, he said, "Things like this used to happen in my country. My dream was to come to this country and be free to express myself. This is not the America I was thinking of."

Other cases cited by Simon involved video cameras in women's locker rooms, e-mail interceptions and on-the-job monitoring that records an employee's key strokes, the length of bathroom breaks and phone calls, and so on. "Unrestrained surveillance of workers has turned many modern offices into electronic sweatshops," he said.

The bill is scheduled for a hearing in late June before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee's Subcommittee on Employment and Productivity. Though previous bills introduced by Simon to regulate electronic monitoring have failed in Congress, "this is the year it may go all the way," according to Simon's press secretary, David Carle. —Aushra Abouzeid

PAPER CHASE

Nader group wants feds to get serious about recycling

The federal government is the largest purchaser of paper in the United States, consuming an estimated 2 percent of the nation's paper. Now consumer advocate Ralph Nader is calling on the

General Services Administration (GSA), the government's purchasing arm, to be more aggressive in buying recycled paper.

"GSA purchases of recycled paper can prod the paper industry to increase its demand for wastepaper," said Eleanor J. Lewis, director of Nader's Government Purchasing Project. "GSA should stop supplying non-recycled paper products when a recycled version is available in sufficient supply. In addition, GSA should increase its efforts to supply paper made without chlorine, a dioxin-producing whitening agent, for which there are safe alternatives."

Lewis' comments came this month, during Senate confirmation hearings for Roger W. Johnson as the new head of the GSA. —Miles Harvey

ROUGH CUTS

JA REID

Latest Theory of Dinosaur Extinction: Death By Low Self-Esteem





FILM NOIR

The Hughes Brothers' cinematic mean streets

The film directors Albert and Allen Hughes, 21-year-old fraternal twins, occupy a comfortable suite in a near north Chicago hotel, casually dressed in jeans, sweatshirts and athletic shoes. Like most twins, their relationship is intensely symbiotic. In conversation, one finishes the other's sentences; both exhibit similar gestures and animated movements. Even their billing, the Hughes Brothers, accentuates their unique linkage.

"People know how to separate us," Albert says. "We want to be known as a team, and we should be looked at as a team." The nature of their collaboration is very refined. Albert handles the technical issues, while Allen works with the actors and screenplay. With the release of their first feature, *Menace II Society*, they enlarge upon the talent they revealed in directing rap and hip-hop videos for Tone-Loc, Tupak Shakur, KRS-One and Yo-Yo.

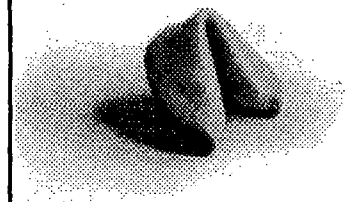
At the moment, the brothers are primarily concerned with what their mother will think of the film. (Aida, a California businesswoman, moved them from their native, violence-torn Detroit to Pomona, Calif., when they were nine years old.) Nihilistic and brutal, *Menace II Society* is an unrelentingly grim portrait of the black underclass, of the destructive cycles of poverty and ruin, and of the dangerous allure of drugs and criminal pursuits. Set in an oppressive Watts and South-Central L.A., the film follows a bleak trajectory of drive-by shootings,

ETC.

By Miles Harvey

FORTUNE COOKIES

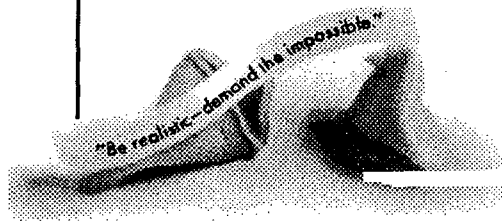
Management Wit and Wisdom from FORTUNE Magazine



Impossible!

Twenty-five years ago last month, Parisian students battled police in the Latin Quarter and French workers staged the largest general strike in that nation's history. Their utopian rallying cry: "Be realistic—demand the impossible." A quarter-century later, that slogan is again being used as a motivational maxim. It appears on the back cover of *Fortune Cookies: Management Wit and Wisdom from Fortune Magazine*. The book describes itself as "essential—and profitable—reading for managers and would-be managers everywhere." As for the source of the famous aphorism, *Fortune Cookies* cites a "sign in the office of T.J. Rodgers, founder and CEO of Cypress Semiconductor."

As Bob Dylan once sang: "The times, they are a-changin'." Or as *Fortune Cookies* puts it:



"Realize that the race is often won by those who get a new idea to market fastest and best rather than by those who create it."

Clinton's inner child

In a Rose Garden news conference to announce Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg's nomination to the Supreme Court, Bill Clinton testily cut off questions after just one reporter's inquiry. That reporter, ABC's Brit Hume, had asked about the politics of the nomination. And Clinton didn't want to talk about politics. The president, who had apparently been moved to tears by Ginsburg's acceptance speech, wanted to talk about his feelings.

As press secretary Dee Dee Meyers explained: "At that particular moment, he was feeling something quite personal, and was hoping to talk about that. And it was clear the questions were going to be about something else." It's too bad that those insensitive reporters had to so rudely intrude upon Bill's private moment.

The White House was able to find a \$200 coiffeur for Clinton; certainly it can locate a psychiatrist at a comparable rate the next time he wants to explore his feelings.

Straight shooting

Gay-rights activists have found an unlikely ally in their battle to end the military's ban on homosexuals: former GOP Sen. Barry Goldwater. "You don't need to be 'straight' to fight and die for your country. You just need to shoot straight," argues Goldwater, a former Air Force pilot. He believes "the government should stay out of people's private lives."

carjackings, street executions and violence that erupts without warning.

The screenplay was developed with writer Tyger Williams out of stories that the brothers heard on the street. The loose plot might be read as a black *Mean Streets*, the story of two young men—the undisciplined Caine (Tyron Turner) and the hotheaded O-Dog (Larenz Tate)—whose friendship leads to tragedy. Though such noted actors as Samuel L. Jackson (*Jungle Fever*), director Bill Duke (*Deep Cover*) and Charles S. Dutton (*Roc*) appear in the margins, the film is made up largely of unknowns and rap stars like Pooh Man, MC Eiht, Too \$hort and the appealing Jada Pinkett, who plays Caine's girlfriend.

Shot by the talented cinematographer Lisa Rinzler (*Gun Crazy*), the film is loaded with harrowing, unnerving imagery. "One thing we wanted was a really gritty and documentary look," Albert Hughes says.

The two don't want to glamorize the violence of ghetto life. "We want the audience to be totally disgusted and appalled by the violence," Allen explains. "It's not supposed to be the kind of violence that peaks and then you applaud; maybe at the beginning you think the violence is being used as entertainment, to get you into the movie, but we want to disgust you with the violence. We didn't want to exploit that lifestyle, but at the same time we wanted to make it real. I don't think we upped the violence or overdid it; the stuff we did has been done before in real life."

They were bracing for the inevitable criticism that *Menace* is too derivative of John Singleton's 1991 film *Boyz n the Hood*. "Anybody in the right state of mind knows our film is totally different than *Boyz n the Hood*," Allen says. "That film dealt on a middle-class level about good kids going to college; this is dealing with a kid from the projects, the ghetto, who doesn't know what he's doing."

Their influences are not Spike Lee, Singleton or Melvyn Van Peebles but the restless camera work of Martin Scorsese, the kinetic editing rhythms of Brian De Palma and the chilling formalism of John McNaughton. The film's opening murder of a Korean grocer and its subsequent viewings on videotape was inspired by McNaughton's *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*. "Our best teachers have been looking at other directors' best films," Allen says.

The \$3 million film was slotted into the prestigious Directors Fortnight at this year's Cannes Film Festival. The early trade reviews have been encouraging. For their next project, the Hughes Brothers plan a road film that examines the effects of the drug trade on inner-city African-American communities.

The brothers are perfectly content playing the roles of resolute Hollywood outsiders, shunning the industry by continuing to live in a Pomona apartment near their mother. "Particularly for black filmmakers, if they stay inside the industry, too many people get inside their heads," Albert says. "The next thing you know, they're making flops, they're making films that don't mean anything. The most important thing is, we're here to make movies. Let's make them and then *step*." They say the last word in unison.

The two feel no pressure to provide role models for anyone. Allen Hughes says, "Our responsibility is to do what we feel is true for us. If you try and go out there and be a role model and please everybody, you end up like Michael Jackson, a pale figure who doesn't know who he is, trying to be Mickey Mouse and living for kids. We're going to be who we are. There are going to be a lot of people who say it's very positive and others who say it's very negative, but as long as you're true to yourself and not hurting anybody in the process, you're being positive."

—Patrick McGavin

T H E F I R S T S T O N E

THE SOCIALIST REIGN IN SPAIN

By Joel Bleifuss

With his electoral triumph on June 6, his fourth consecutive victory since 1982, Spain's socialist president, Felipe González, joins the ranks of the longest serving leaders of 20th-century democracies.

This month's election demonstrates that Spain has a solid left-center majority of about 59 percent of the voters, including the PSOE with 38 percent, the United Left (IU), a coalition controlled by former communists, with 10 percent, and left-center nationalist parties with 9 percent.

The left's good showing is particularly significant considering that 20 percent of Spaniards are unemployed and that the PSOE has been wracked by scandals. Despite the economic crisis, standards of living have clearly improved for the majority of Spaniards since the Socialists came to power. Ironically, the victory of the Socialist Workers Party of Spain (PSOE) comes at a time when the British, French and German socialist parties have been eclipsed by parties of the center-right.

Many on the left, who came of political age under Franco in the '60s and '70s, are pleased with the election results—not so much because the PSOE won, but because the right-wing People's Party (PP) lost. Led by José María Aznar, a young economist utterly devoid of charm, the PP managed to gain only 35 percent of the vote. Prior to the vote, opinion polls had shown the two parties running neck and neck.

None of the people here in Spain whose political opinions I value are inspired by the dominant leadership of either the PSOE or the IU. In that respect, their feelings are similar to those I have for the leaders of the U.S. Democratic Party. The difference between our respective political worlds—beside the fact that the PSOE is to the left of the Democratic Party—is that Spaniards elect their parliament through a system of proportional representation in which each voter casts a single vote for a party that puts forward a slate of candidates. For example, in this last election, Spaniards elected 349 deputies who represent 11 parties to sit in the Cortés (parliament). (The voter turnout in this election was 78 percent.)

But because Spanish voters cast their ballot for a party slate and not a person, their political identity revolves less

around personalities than on the ideas put forward by the political parties through their affiliated leader. Currently, the left in Spain can choose from a political menu that offers two parties, the PSOE and the IU, which together contain five different ideological "currents" or factions.

How Spain's divided left will influence the González government as it guides Spain through the next few years—how that left succeeds and the ways in which it fails—will be followed closely by the left in the rest of the European Community.

The PSOE is made up of two main factions, the Guerristas and the Renovators, which are roughly equal in power and influence. A third group, the Left Socialists, has little influence.

The Guerristas take their name from the former vice-president and former ally of Felipe González, Alfonso Guerra. Currently the vice-secretary of the PSOE, Guerra is the No. 2 man in the party, though he is reviled by many of those to his left and his right. Guerra has his political base among the party apparatchiks and in Andalucía, Extremadura and the Basque country. These regions, which have a strong left working class, are where the PSOE did best. It was there that the Guerristas waged a populist—some would say demagogic—campaign based on an old-time socialist message. With those victories in his pocket, Guerra and his Guerristas will make a strong showing at the PSOE's convention this coming fall when they will go head to head with the Renovators.

The Renovators, based in the wealthier cities of central

Spain, particularly Madrid, can be characterized as yuppie social democrats—Eurocentric, neo-liberal in their economic views. (Included among the Renovators is a group of prominent socialist bankers.) Felipe González is considered to be closer to the Renovators than the group led by Guerra.

In alliance with the Renovators and against the Guerristas stands the third PSOE faction, the Left Socialists. Their voices can now be heard calling on González to turn to the left—to form his new government with the support of the IU rather than the Basque and Catalan nationalist parties the president has promised to make his allies.

The old-line communists that make up the dominant faction of the United Left have not voiced any desire to govern in coalition with the Socialists. Prior to the election many on the left had hoped that, with the PSOE weakened by the economic crisis and corruption, the IU would have a good opportunity to step forward with a critique of the socialist bankers who have been at the helm of Spain's foundering economy. But the IU leadership failed to seize the moment, and the party's share of the vote remained at the 1989 level of 10 percent. There are two reasons for the IU's dismal electoral showing.

First, the closeness of the election ensured that many on the left who would have been willing to vote against the socialists feared a victory by the right-wing People's Party and cast their ballots *against* the conservatives rather than *for* the PSOE.

Second, and more importantly, the IU failed because it had become a mirror image of its largest founding member, the Communist Party of Spain. Consequently, in the best Leninist tradition, the IU suffered a serious schism prior to the election. The communist leadership in the IU in effect purged those parliamentary deputies who had voted to support the Maastricht treaty rather than abstaining, as was dictated by the party's "general coordinator," Julio Anguita.

Those dissident deputies are the leaders of a group in the IU known as the New Left. For their support of Maastricht, IU officials punished the New Left leaders by slating them low on the party's election list, thereby guaranteeing that they would not be re-elected to parliament. Ironically, but perhaps not coincidentally, the three New Left deputies that were purged were the only IU political leaders who enjoy nationwide, broad-based popularity. They included, first and foremost, Cristina Almeida, a charismatic and exuberant feminist lawyer who has become a national celebrity, enjoying a following among women that transcends ideology.

Without the New Left leadership on

the IU lists, the party failed to win the votes of many in the professional classes who had heretofore formed a significant bloc of support in both the Communist Party of Spain and the IU. At the same time, people in the traditionally "red" districts of Madrid, finding nothing appealing about the IU's unimaginative leadership, voted for the first time for the conservative candidate. Such right-wing communists are in some ways the Spanish version of our Reagan Democrats.

Since the election, leaders of the New Left, like their PSOE counterparts, the Left Socialists, have argued that the IU should cooperate with the PSOE and encourage González to turn to the left to form a national government—a compromise that Anguita and the old guard in the IU have refused to make.

For his part, González has made no overtures toward the IU, rightly deciding that its current leadership has nothing to offer either him or the country.

The Spanish democratic left now has to figure out ways to move the political debate in its direction and away from the bankers at the PSOE's center. For this reason, many on the Spanish left will be closely watching the next movement of Cristina Almeida and her New Left allies. Some hope the leaders of the New Left will leave the IU and form their own party—a party that could then supplant the IU as the third force in Spanish politics. ◀

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



E N V I R O N M E N T

Bad vibes

W

hen Howard Winn brought his bride Stella to their new home on Panoramic Highway in 1952, it was like arriving in paradise. Only half an hour from San Francisco, the Winn's modest split-level house sits on a plateau halfway up Mount Tamalpais with its spectacular view of the city and the bay below. "I have seen the Sierras on a very clear winter's day from here," boasts Winn. Westward, the land drops sharply into thickets of redwoods and the grassy hills of Marin's headlands. After that there's just the deep blue sea.

"There's less stress up here because you're not living right on top of somebody else," says Stella. Sounds like heaven on earth, doesn't it? Well, it was, until something silent and insidious turned paradise into a nightmare for Stella Winn. It was something as improbable as the

rare lymphoma Stella developed in her pelvis. The culprit appears to have been corroded aluminum wire on the Winn's roof that generated a strong electromagnetic field (EMF) near their Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) hook-up. Stella spent a lot of time at her desk directly beneath the faulty service drop just a few feet above her head.

When the Winn's neighbor, Ruth Bramell, nearly died of a rare type of bone cancer last year, her husband began to measure EMFs around his house and neighborhood with a device called a gaussmeter. It was Jim Bramell who discovered that the Winns had a wiring problem. "Starting at Mountain Home, eight out of nine households with high EMF readings also had cancer," Bramell said.

Across the street from the Winns, for example, George Duke developed a brain tumor after sleeping just inches from an automatic sprinkler clock that was mounted on the outside wall of his bedroom. The possibility that the timer might be danger-

ous never entered Duke's head, but the device's electromagnetic field did. Duke was lucky. Doctors removed the tumor and he survived.

Just up the street, Michael Lopez wasn't so lucky. He died of two inoperable brain tumors five years ago. Michael's widow, Sue Lopez, says she's more worried about the EMFs from her toaster oven than the electric lines that surround the house and the power pole that stands just beyond her property line.

And there was Gladys Janoff, the very picture of health and fitness until she suddenly came down with lymphatic intestinal cancer three years ago. According to Max Janoff, a high-power tension line ran right past their kitchen window on its way up to the tracking station atop Mount Tam. Was that what killed her? "I'm certain of it," Max says. Since Gladys died Max has hardly touched the Steinway grand piano that dominates his living room, and he still can't believe he survived his wife. An artist and designer, Gladys rode bicycles and climbed mountains well into her 60s. "She was a beautiful woman, and anybody who knew her and knew me would say I would be the first to go because she was so active," Janoff says.

Electromagnetic fields are generated any time electric current is passed through a wire. Generally speaking, the greater the current the greater the electromagnetic field, and that's one reason why high-tension power lines have become the focus of so much public concern. Whether they cause cancer has been a hotly debated topic in scientific circles for more than a decade, and the electric power industry has long denied any connection.

"You can find some experts who think it's bunk and some who think it's dangerous," says Robert Liburdy, a

Even without a "smoking gun," studies are forcing scientists to reassess the health risks of electromagnetic fields.

By Peter White



mals to develop cancer. And still other claim they are just a step away from discovering the secret of how EMFs cause the abnormal cell growth associated with cancer. But so far, the biological mechanism involved remains a mystery, and most observers say new research probably won't yield any definitive results for at least another two years.

But even without a "smoking gun" proving EMFs are carcinogenic, two recent Swedish studies are forcing scientists and policy-makers to reassess a number of human studies that concluded that the closer you get to EMFs and the longer you are exposed the greater the risk of developing leukemia, brain tumors or lymphoma.

The Swedish researchers answered the most frequently cited criticisms of earlier epidemiological studies and established a clear dose-response relationship between the strength of electromagnetic fields and the increased incidence of cancer, especially among children and electric workers. Although industry-sponsored researchers in the U.S. complain that "the numbers are quite small," the Swedish research showed that children continuously exposed to field strengths of 1-2 milligauss are twice as likely to develop leukemia as children who are not exposed, and children exposed to 3 milligauss are almost four times as likely to develop leukemia.

In Mill Valley's Hauke Park, children were playing in magnetic fields of 50 milligauss when Jim Bramell took readings there in December. That level is 25 times greater than what the Swedish researchers found hazardous to children. The fields come from a 80,000-volt power line that runs directly over the park and a 12,000-volt distribution line buried alongside the sand-filled playground. Even higher levels of EMFs were found by Bramell in front of a preschool on Miller Avenue. A power line junction box is buried just across the street.

biochemist at Lawrence Lab in Berkeley. Some researchers think electric razors may cause leukemia, and a number of studies show EMFs from computer terminals and electric blankets can cause women to miscarry.

But other scientists, most notably physicist Robert Adair, dismiss the whole issue as ridiculous. Adair claims that EMFs—especially weak background levels from power lines—can't cause cancer. Other researchers are withholding their opinions until some budding Nobel laureate actually proves that a particular level of EMFs causes laboratory ani-

"It wouldn't surprise me," PG&E spokesman Fred Skillman says of the high readings. "You would expect higher readings in areas that have higher loads and greater current." Skillman would not comment on whether the EMF levels Bramell measured at the park and near the school were dangerous for the children exposed to them. He says the Swedish findings were inconclusive. "The recent studies that have been done provide an important piece of information to this complex issue, but we need to continue supporting biological, neurological and cellular research in order to

gain more information."

Hoping to overcome the objections of industry skeptics like Skillman, the Swedish research team used sophisticated computer models and highly accurate demographic data on 500,000 people who lived within 30 meters of transmission lines between 1960 and 1985. Their results convinced the electrical safety division of NUTEK, the Swedish energy department, to institute new safety limits on EMFs which, if adopted in the U.S., would cost billions to implement.

"There are still many unanswered questions, but the data is extremely strong," says Louis Slessin, editor of *Microwave News*, a well-respected industry newsletter in its 13th year of publication. "It's like the emperor's new clothes," he adds. "Everybody knows there's a causal effect now, but no one is willing to admit it."

Why not? The reasons may have more to do with economic and political considerations than scientific ones. Much of the EMF research is funded by utility companies through the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) in Palo Alto, and for many years EPRI was the only game in town, according to epidemiologist David Savitz. Industry-sponsored scientists are understandably cautious about calling a spade a spade when next year's research project may be at stake, and, not surprisingly, most researchers say the jury is still out on whether electromagnetic fields cause cancer.

"We would never let the tobacco industry in this country say that the research on smoking is inconclusive," says attorney Mike Withey. "We should absolutely not listen to them." Withey had to go all the way to Bozeman, Mont., to find an EMF expert willing to testify against San Diego Gas & Electric Co. in the case of a five-year-old girl whose parents claim she developed cancer from nearby power lines.

Normally, when scientists finish a project like the latest Swedish studies, they publish their findings in scientific journals, and the results must then stand up to criticism from other experts. But when it comes to EMF research, peer review is dominated by hired guns just spoiling for a fight.

Dr. Jan Stolwijk, a Yale University epidemiologist, for example, wrote a scathing four-page critique of the Swedish studies to an Australian utility group one week before the scientists first presented their findings at an international EMF research conference in San Diego last November. When research showing a positive link between EMFs and cancer prompts such pre-emptive attacks, even scientists who don't take money from the EPRI feel the chill.

"We tend to be much more cautious with our studies than other people might be, and that's because we are constantly finding ourselves overscrutinized," says Jerry Phillips, a molecular biologist at an EMF research lab in Loma Linda, Calif., which doesn't accept EPRI funding. "We're talking about the electrification of the world," says Phillips.

American utility officials aren't falling all over themselves to acknowledge there is a causal link between EMFs and cancer because, if they did, they might find themselves saddled with the mammoth job of retrofitting much of the

country's electric power grid, not to mention multimillion-dollar lawsuits brought by cancer victims. Their official position is that since it isn't certain that EMFs cause cancer, they need to be studied more. In other words, more industry-supported research. EMF activists say that's just a way of looking good and doing nothing.

"It's not surprising on the part of the utilities," says Slessin of *Microwave News*. "But health officials should be putting the burden on the utilities to take precautions, and yet no one is speaking out. You have to start taking remedial action sometime, even in the absence of a clear mechanism," he says.

In Sweden, the public utility company Vattenfall has announced its intention to go along with strict new EMF safety standards and to immediately start reducing EMF levels near its facilities. In California, PG&E says it will take "no-cost or low-cost" steps to reduce EMF levels in response to public concern. PG&E's current policy, embraced by both the California Public Utilities Commission and state health officials, is one of "prudent avoidance." In other words, when it comes to EMF exposure, you're pretty much on your own.

One day last August, Bramell's gaussmeter bounced to 50 milligauss underneath a power pole next to Rick and Jodee Upjohn's two-story house overlooking Richardson Bay. Bramell stopped to report his findings, and Upjohn says that this probably saved the life of his daughter, Madee, who is three and a half years old. For months, Madee had been waking up whining and crying uncontrollably. Her appetite was poor, and she couldn't explain what was bothering her. "It was unbelievable," recalls Madee's mother Jodee.

Madee's bedroom is directly below the service drop, and Bramell measured about 80 milligauss there. At Madee's bed, the reading was somewhat less—about 50 milligauss—but still high enough to cause "a dark cloud over her head," according to her father. When Bramell discovered high levels of EMFs all over Madee's bedroom, her parents quickly moved her out and called in an EMF specialist.

A recent Boston University study found that people who live near power lines are twice as likely to display symptoms like Madee's. "Ten days after that kid was out of that room, her appetite increased. She woke up smiling and happy," says Jodee. But that wasn't the end of Madee's problems or her parents' nightmares. Madee developed internal bleeding from an intestinal growth. "They went up inside her and removed it. Thank God, it wasn't malignant, but in such a young girl, one has to wonder," says Jodee.

As with the Winns, the Upjohns' problems were traced to a corroded aluminum wire at the service drop on their roof and to their water line, which picked up EMFs from nearby houses. Once discovered, both problems were fixed for less than \$200, and EMF readings at Madee's bedside dropped to zero.

Bramell says EMF-related troubles are often overlooked because there is widespread ignorance about the phenome-

non, and official skepticism about potential danger from EMFs creates its own set of problems. For example, the Upjohns called PG&E to verify Bramell's readings but were told "everything is fine" by the PG&E technician whose readings were much lower than Bramell's. Two successive measurements taken by an EMF specialist, however, confirmed Bramell's numbers.

Author Paul Brodeur, who first alerted the nation to the dangers of asbestos and to the industry cover-up of its carcinogenicity, has no doubts that there has been a deliberate effort to do just that. In a lengthy article in a recent issue of *The New Yorker*, Brodeur meticulously traced the making and then the unmaking of a 367-page Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report that recommended EMFs be classified as possible carcinogens. After much falderol—and the intercession of the White House, EPRI and the Air Force, among others—the EPA decided not to rate EMFs at all.

"There are very legitimate reasons for not using the cancer-rating scale at this time," says Shelly Rosenblum, an environmental engineer in the EPA's San Francisco office. "Staff thought we should use it; management didn't." Rosenblum says scientists still lack a good understanding of the physiological effects of EMFs, as well as a good theory that would explain them. He also says there was no correlation between EMF animal studies and human studies.

"The one missing link is the mechanism, but we don't know the mechanism for asbestos or cigarette smoke, either. It doesn't mean you can't do anything. It doesn't mean you disregard the problem, which is what is going on," says *Microwave News* editor Slessin. And proponents of regulating electromagnetic fields say the evidence linking EMFs to cancer is much stronger than it is for second-hand smoke, which the EPA last December rated in its "Class A" group of known human carcinogens.

The California Public Utilities Commission, which regulates the power industry in California, is following the EPA's lead regarding EMFs—they cite an inconclusive scientific debate to justify doing little or nothing about power-line EMFs. A 17-member EMF consensus group that met for five months last year to develop EMF policy for the state failed to consider the latest Swedish studies in their deliberations. The administrative law judge presiding over the hearing refused to admit them into evidence. As a result, California's EMF policy calls for more EMF research, public education, "prudent avoidance" and "no-cost or low-cost" efforts to reduce fields but does not include safety limits on EMF exposure, siting restrictions for schools and other public buildings, or any specific EMF mitigation requirements at all.

The unlucky few who suffer from EMF-related cancers are beginning to sue in the face of official denials that EMFs carry health risks. One EMF case brought against Boeing aircraft by one of its workers has already been decided in the plaintiff's favor. But a Petaluma policeman who sued the makers of a radar gun for giving him Hodgkin's disease lost

his case, as did the family of a five-year-old San Diego girl who developed a rare kidney tumor.

"There are going to be more lawsuits," says Oakland attorney Aaron Simon. "They're trying to have it both ways," Simon says of the utility companies. "They are taking the tobacco company line in court, spending millions for defense and telling us they'll crush us if we dare to sue them, and everywhere else [they're] appearing perfectly reasonable, telling people to take prudent precaution. It's not going to work in the long run."

Because many of the nation's schools are situated near power lines, where land is more affordable, EMF dangers reach the children first. Parents whose children are forced to attend these schools have had mixed results in trying to persuade health, education and utility officials to reduce EMF levels at the schools.

At two Southern California schools that experienced unusually high numbers of cancers, parents were unsuccessful in getting utility companies to move the nearby power lines. But in Mill Valley, PG&E has agreed to move power lines next to two elementary schools—but the school district is footing the bill.

"I think it's time we came clean, admitted we have a problem and started working on solutions," says Slessin. If the industry is living in denial about EMF health risks, as Slessin thinks, then judges and juries will ultimately decide who should bear those risks—the utilities or the unfortunate few who get sick. Litigators for cancer victims say that losing about a dozen cases will shock the electric power industry into mending its ways.

Future court battles will raise a number of policy questions with enormous consequences for the electric power industry. How much money, for example, should they pay in compensation for past EMF exposures that produced adverse health effects? How much money should be spent retrofitting existing power lines to reduce EMF levels or to buy land to widen safety corridors, to resite homes and schools? And who should pay for all this—the power companies or the taxpayer?

Meanwhile, the children at Park Elementary School in Mill Valley are sitting in electromagnetic fields that give them four times more chance of developing leukemia than if they weren't. Even so, leukemia is a rare disease. Health officials say only one out of 20,000 kids gets it. The Swedish studies show that for children exposed to EMFs between 2-3 milligauss, like those at Park School, the odds increase to one out of 5,000.

"But we must weigh that with the fact that childhood leukemia is a terrible disease, and if you are the unlucky one who develops it, it's 100 percent, for you," says Cace Bechelli, a Park School parent whose husband developed leukemia three years ago. "As parents, I think we need to ask ourselves the questions: Are we willing to wait for more conclusive proof? And are we willing to take that chance with our children's health?"

Peter White is a journalist and video producer in Sonoma, Calif.

F R E E T R A D E

Gut check

Bill Clinton has abandoned many of his campaign promises, from his support for a middle-class tax cut to his opposition to most-favored-nation trade status for China. But he is still sticking to the nuanced position he took on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a still-unratified treaty that the United States, Mexico and Canada signed last September, removing barriers on trade and foreign investment. In a highly publicized speech this past October, Clinton promised to support NAFTA if and only if the three countries could reach supplemental agreements on labor and the environment.

NAFTA is one issue on which the ever-waffling administration is holding fairly firm. But will Clinton buckle under to corporate pressure?

By John B. Judis
WASHINGTON D.C.

NAFTA's critics had charged that the treaty would encourage American companies to flee south in search of lower wages and lax environmental regulation, but Clinton promised that these supplemental

agreements would "require each country to enforce its own environmental and worker standards." That would be a significant requirement since—on paper—Mexico's environmental and labor standards are the equal of America's or Canada's.

Clinton's stand appeased some critics, but alarmed corporate lobbyists such as those in the industry group USA*NAFTA. Clinton had barely settled in the White House when these lobbyists, backed by some officials within his own administration, began urging the president to adopt purely *pro forma* agreements.

This spring, the lobbyists appeared to have carried the day. The administration's National Economic Council (NEC), the coordinating body set up to handle economic policy, proposed that the administration back away from its commitment to enforcing the labor and environmental agreements. But after an uproar from Democrats in Congress, Clinton reverted to his original position. The administration's trade representative, Mickey Kantor,

advocated setting up independent commissions on labor and the environment that would have the power to ensure that the countries enforced their own law.

Now the battle has been joined by negotiators from Mexico and Canada who have rejected the administration's demand for commissions with enforcement power. At meetings in Ottawa last month and in Washington June 8-10, the negotiations ended in deadlock. Clinton now has to decide whether he is willing to tough it out—to endure the criticisms of the Mexicans, Canadians and corporate lobbyists here in order to achieve an agreement that will benefit workers as well as business. The dispute over the NAFTA side agreements is shaping up to be as climactic and portentous as the battle over the budget and health care reform.

Clinton arrived at his own position after months of debate within his campaign. Clinton's campaign staff, including Kantor and James Carville, wanted him to oppose the treaty. But some of his key supporters, including future Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen and future Secretary of State Warren Christopher, backed it enthusiastically. Clinton's final position reflected a compromise between the two camps, but unlike other Clinton compromises, it was one that had a logic of its own.

Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-MO), *L.A. Weekly* columnist Richard Rothstein and other Clinton advisers argued for conditional support for NAFTA. They pointed out that what the treaty's opponents feared most—the migration of American firms across the border in search of lower wages and lax environmental regulation—was already occurring and would continue to occur regardless of whether the treaty was signed. Since taking office in 1988, Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari has been

removing tariffs on imports and restrictions on foreign investment, while reducing workers' wages by devaluing the peso; NAFTA will simply legitimate this process.

Gephardt and Rothstein argued against supporting the treaty, which the Bush administration signed. But they contended that by adding side agreements on labor and the environment, a new Democratic administration could use NAFTA to regulate economic relations between the two countries to the benefit of American workers. This position eventually won the support of many NAFTA critics, including the AFL-CIO.

But once the Clinton administration took office and began formulating its stands on the side agreements, the same battles over NAFTA's thrust and purpose resurfaced. Officials from Bentsen's Treasury Department, Christopher's State Department and the NEC largely saw NAFTA as a vehicle for greater business income—whether from exports or foreign investment. They viewed the side agreements as a potential threat to business prerogatives.

On the other side, Kantor and some Labor Department officials held out for agreements that would protect American workers and the environment. Kantor favored setting up commissions that would have independent investigative power and that would be able to authorize trade sanctions against countries and businesses that violated labor and environmental standards. Kantor even considered demanding that Mexico agree to increase its minimum wage—now hovering at about 50 cents an hour—as productivity increased.

But Kantor, a former corporate lawyer with no background in trade, was excluded from the early decisions on the side agreements. These were made in March at meetings of an NEC subcommittee, chaired by Robert Kyle, Bentsen's former trade assistant. Its decisions reflected the opinion of those like Bentsen and Kyle who believed that NAFTA should be preserved intact and not encumbered with new potentially anti-business provisions.

At the first NEC meeting on March 3, a Department of Labor representative sent over a proposal that mirrored Kantor's approach. The proposal called for a far-reaching labor agreement that would include indexing the Mexican minimum wage to productivity growth and adopting a common corporate code of conduct. At the same meeting, State Department official Curtis Bohlen, a Bush holdover, proposed a minimal approach to regulation that would

deprive the proposed environmental commission of any enforcement powers.

While no final decisions were made, the NEC adopted Bohlen's general approach. According to one trade consultant who has worked with the administration on NAFTA, the NEC members were primarily concerned about Mexicans bringing complaints against American businesses. During the meeting, one administration official raised the possibility that the Mexican government

could demand that Los Angeles adhere to the provisions of the Clean Air Act. NEC members warned that the commissions' enforcement powers would be "unconstitutional."

The NEC drafts did require each country to enforce their own laws, but they omitted the Labor Department's proposal for indexing the Mexican minimum wage. More important, the drafts failed to grant the labor and environmental commissions the power to investigate complaints or enforce their findings. As word of these drafts leaked to Capitol Hill, Democrats began to warn the administration that an agreement lacking tough side agreements would not make it through the House.

In May the administration—concerned about Democratic defections and about the growing popularity of NAFTA critic Ross Perot—relented and included stronger enforcement provisions in its proposals. At the May 19-21 meetings in Ottawa, the U.S. presented proposals that would allow a country to impose trade sanctions if two of the three countries agreed that one of the countries had not corrected a "persistent and unjustifiable pattern" of not enforcing its environmental or labor laws.

But both Mexico and Canada balked at granting the commissions enforcement powers. In its proposal, Mexico wanted to limit the commissions' powers of public censure. The Mexican government's proposal on labor standards also omitted any mention of wages or bargaining rights, confining itself to hygiene and safety issues. The Canadian proposal deprived the commissions of the power to make independent investigations.

Both Mexico and Canada were concerned about the infringement of their sovereignty, but they were also moved by opposition from their business elites. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce warned that it would oppose NAFTA if the side agreements included enforcement powers. "Sanctions and fines are a new form of unpredictable and unacceptable contingency protection," the chamber declared in a written statement to



the Canadian government.

After the three sides could reach no agreement at the Ottawa meeting, American business groups began pressuring the Clinton administration to drop its insistence on enforcement powers. At a May 27 meeting with NEC official Bowman Cutter, representatives of USA*NAFTA and other American business lobbies called on the administration to drop its demand for sanctions and its demand for an independent investigative role for the commissions. Republican House and Senate members also threatened not to back NAFTA if the side agreements are included. Sen. John Danforth (R-MO), who had earlier organized a Republican letter in support of NAFTA, called the enforcement powers "a terrible idea."

So far, the administration has held firm. Negotiators are now planning a high-level meeting in July, but time is already running out for the American side. If Clinton doesn't get an agreement this summer, he won't be able to get Congress to vote on the treaty this year. Instead, the debate on NAFTA will have to occur during an election year, when politicians of both parties will be reluctant to accept an agreement that sends jobs south.

What will Clinton do? If the negotiations on the budget are any indication, the president will ultimately cave in to business demands and agree to a cosmetic compromise on enforcement that will reduce the labor and environmental commissions to advisory bodies. The Canadian government has already begun to float a compromise plan.

Clinton can reason that even if he loses some Democratic votes, he will gain Republican votes that he did not have during the budget battles. He will also consolidate his support from corporations and Wall Street and avoid an acrimonious public clash with Mexico and Canada.

But if Clinton does take this path, he will not only produce a bad agreement, but he'll widen growing splits between the labor and business wings of the party.

Clinton's best course of action is to

tough it out. If the Mexicans and Canadians believe that Clinton is serious about the side agreements, they will give in. The Canadians don't have much to lose, and the Salinas government will take NAFTA on almost any terms. Gephardt and the Democrats will support an agreement with

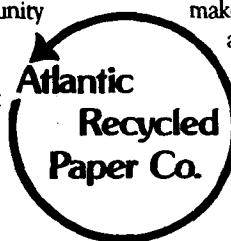
enforceable side agreements, and enough Republicans can be won over to carry the House and the Senate. Clinton will make some enemies among American multinationals, but if a Democrat can't learn to exploit this kind of opposition, he doesn't deserve to be president. ◀



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COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Banking on the inner city

A

s part of his proposal to redevelop poor urban and rural communities, candidate Bill Clinton pledged to create 100 new lending institutions modeled after Chicago's South Shore Bank. The publicity thrust this small southside bank into national prominence and raised hopes for the potential of its brand of "community development banking."

Now the plans have been scaled back. Community development banking, the Clintonites have learned from its practitioners, is not a quick-fix cure-all for poverty. It's a difficult, long-run strategy with great possibilities but distinct limits. And it must be custom-tailored to different communities by individuals with skills and motivation rare among bankers.

Clinton's anticipated proposal to invest \$382 million

over four years, to be matched by non-federal funds, in community development financial institutions will strengthen this emergent form of socially responsive investing.

As the history of South Shore Bank reveals, Clinton's bet on community development banking is well-placed, but it will not substitute for a broader urban or anti-poverty policy.

Twenty years ago the South Shore neighborhood seemed destined for decay. It had long been a solidly middle-class neighborhood of apartment buildings and single-family homes, located along the shores of Lake Michigan southeast of Hyde Park and the University of Chicago. During the '60s, South Shore's population changed rapidly from white to black, and from middle class to poor.

As whites fled, their money went with them. Absentee landlords neglected buildings, and retail businesses closed. The leading local bank lost half its deposits and virtually stopped making loans in the area. A group of investors wanted to move the bank out of the neighborhood, but was blocked by community opponents and federal regulators.

Around that time, a small band of young Hyde Park bankers who were committed to

civil rights had been thinking about how they might use a bank to fight the racially driven pattern of disinvestment and devastation that was common in Chicago and other cities. They believed community-based organizations were the only forces that cared about the full range of neighborhood issues. Yet unlike hospitals, universities or permanently capitalized businesses, these community groups never had the resources to accomplish much. So they decided to form a bank that would act like a community organization. Despite their credentials, they barely scraped together—with the help of charitable foundations—the \$3.2 million to establish a bank holding company and buy the bank, now known as Shorebank Corporation and South Shore Bank.

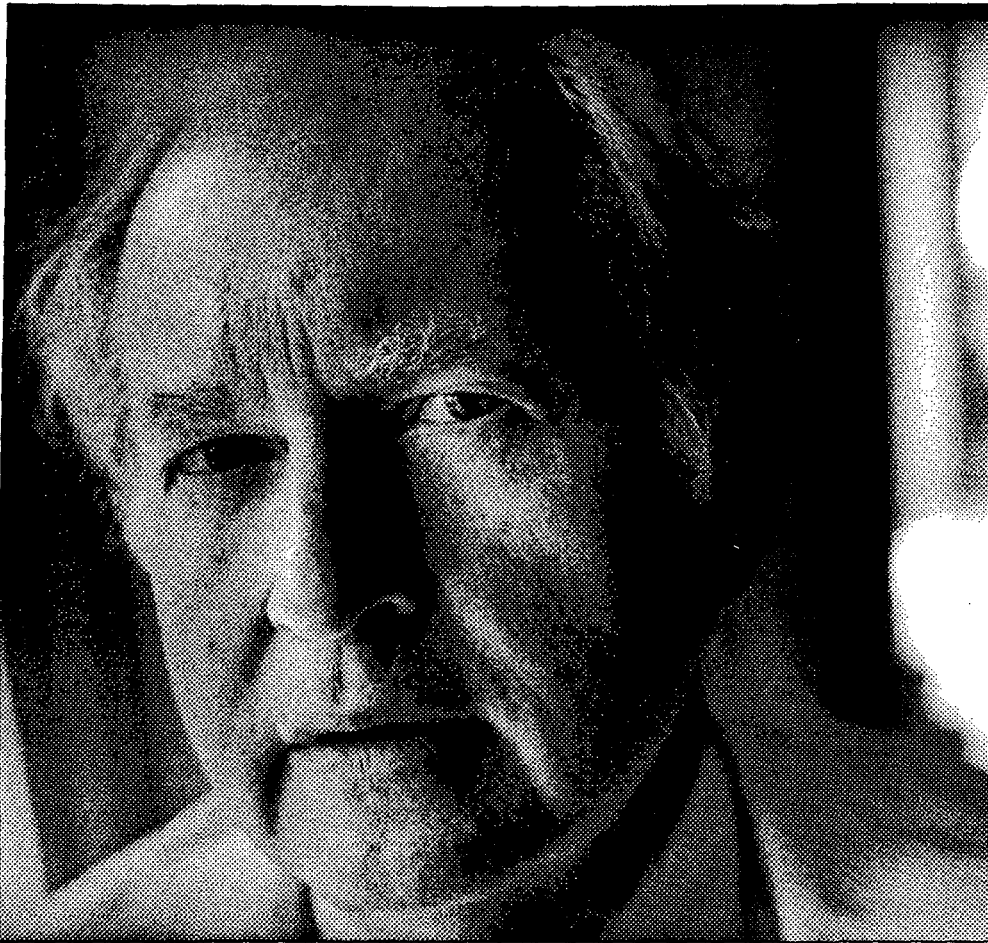
Two decades later, the South Shore area is a solid, if still socially troubled neighborhood that has retained and refurbished its housing stock. The bank has spurred some job growth and retail revitalization, although far less than it had hoped. Still, the bank can take some credit for the neighborhood's self-sustaining, albeit weak, economy. Other banks now compete to offer single-family mortgages in the neighborhood.

The bank and neighborhood have had to swim against the '80s tide of plant closings (such as the ones at nearby steel mills) and rising inequality: in real terms, median household income stagnated locally—at around \$16,000 in 1982 dollars—and the neighborhood poverty rate rose to 27 percent in 1990 from 23 percent a decade earlier.

The bank itself has not only survived—no small feat—but also greatly expanded deposits and capital, generating modest profits but maintaining a better record on loan loss-

Chicago's South Shore Bank is a lending institution that acts like a community organization. The Clinton administration wants to see more like it.

By David Moberg
Chicago



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bankable opportunities in low-income communities. This neglect has often been due to racial blinders: the Federal Reserve found in 1991 that African-Americans are still twice as likely as comparable whites to be refused mortgages. Conventional bankers haven't had the skills nor motivation to nurture profitable lending. But South Shore Bank creates these opportunities by seeking out, training and nurturing neighborhood residents who seem good prospects to buy, rehab and manage apartment buildings.

Development banking takes more time and effort than conventional, passive lending, or simply buying Treasury notes with depositors' money. The work is often small-scale and nitty-gritty, not involving the sort of financial pyrotechnics that might appeal to many banking whiz kids. With fewer conventional rewards and difficulty in raising capital, the South Shore model has been much praised but little replicated.

South Shore operates as a conventional bank, paying prevailing interest rates to most depositors. The bank also lends money at market rates, but unlike most banks, South Shore insists that borrowers rehab the buildings that they purchase. However, the support institutions—without which the bank would not have succeeded—require outside funds. Also, without government low-income housing subsidies, the bank and its subsidiaries could not have pulled off some of the major rehabilitation projects.

Shorebank Chairman Ronald Grzywinski.

At first South Shore Bank tried, with some success, to capture the savings and checking accounts of the neighborhood's new black residents. Yet many blacks saw banking or shopping in their own neighborhood as inferior to patronizing the big institutions downtown. So the bank's managers, recognizing that even middle-class areas do not rely only on indigenous credit, decided to solicit deposits from socially conscious investors throughout the country. Now nearly 60 percent of the bank's roughly \$210 million in deposits are from foundations, religious orders, corporations and individuals who want their bank deposits to help rebuild an endangered urban neighborhood. By some estimates, American institutions and individuals have put about \$700 billion into

es than comparable conventional banks. Through the end of last year, South Shore Bank had renovated 30 percent of the housing units in the neighborhood, investing a total of \$351 million, including more than \$41 million last year. It has expanded operations beyond South Shore to another black neighborhood on Chicago's west side, to rural Arkansas and upstate Michigan—and even to Poland and Bangladesh. Recently, six major Chicago banks and three other institutions invested nearly \$9 million in the bank, substantially increasing its \$16 million equity and conferring a stamp of establishment approval.

Over the years, Shorebank has created several complementary institutions that have been crucial to its mission: City Lands Corporation, a real estate development company; the Neighborhood Institute, an all-purpose non-profit training and organizing arm that channels private charity and government program money into the area; a small minority venture capital fund; and a consulting firm that is helping spread the lessons learned about development banking to other cities.

"We never thought of ourselves only as a bank," said Shorebank chairman Ronald Grzywinski, one of the founders, "and still don't."

South Shore Bank has shown that ordinary banks and thrifts—which have become increasingly concentrated and divorced from any community—have neglected sound,

"socially conscious" investments, making the theoretical pool for development banking fairly large.

South Shore Bank's greatest success has been rehabbing multi-family apartments, a key to stabilizing the area, and creating a cadre of around 200 new black (and some Croatian-American) apartment rehab and management entrepreneurs. The bank struggled unsuccessfully to reinvigorate a strip of retail stores in the heart of the neighborhood. But eventually the bank's leaders concluded that the growing dominance of shopping malls as well as lingering street security problems were overwhelming their attempts to revive the strip. Instead, City Lands recruited a large grocery chain as an anchor and constructed its own mall, which has proven successful.

Shorebank's efforts to generate jobs, including a couple of business incubators, have been only modest successes. In its newer projects—like in the impoverished Austin neighborhood on the city's west side—the bank is putting more emphasis on job creation, especially in manufacturing. And instead of going it alone, the bank is working in conjunction with several neighborhood groups.

The bank's success at stabilizing the neighborhood has been dramatic and in striking contrast with other banks' practices. And the motivation of South Shore's founders has been so steadfast—original investors have received no dividends although the book value of their investment has risen—that it is hard to find critics. Yet Stanley Hallett and Steven Perkins, both longtime associates of the bank, argue that despite its economic achievements, the bank has failed to develop the community socially and politically.

Grzywinski acknowledges that it has been tougher to tackle problems of education, health care and neighborhood social life. Shorebank and the Neighborhood Institute still work on these social issues, but the bank's top priorities have been making itself viable and re-establishing a dynamic local economy. In all of its decisions, it has been only loosely accountable to the neighborhood. That independence has given the bank valuable power to act but compromised the initial democratic vision. If a development bank elsewhere were in less sensitive hands, tensions could arise between bank and community aims.

"A big part of what we do is to make markets work again," Grzywinski argued. That is possible in neighborhoods that have not collapsed into dead-end poverty and despair. But Clinton administration planners should be aware that a South Shore Bank is not the answer for a South Bronx.

South Shore Bank is the oldest of only four community development banks in the country. Yet there are also loan funds, credit unions, micro-enterprise lenders and non-profit community development corporations. Altogether, these community development financial institutions manage about \$700 million in capital and have made more than \$2 billion in loans to individuals and businesses neglected by conventional lenders.

Because these institutions require specially trained staff, intimate knowledge of their community and a long-range commitment to succeed, Clinton has wisely decided to focus on strengthening and upgrading this network as much as on creating new banks. Community development banks like

South Shore have more potential in most cases than the other institutions, but if Clinton had moved too fast in cloning South Shore it might have led to failure and recrimination. Also, these development institutions have their greatest potential as part of a more comprehensive urban and economic strategy. Nobody—least of all Grzywinski—sees them as silver bullets in the war on poverty.

Now some financial establishment leaders are recognizing that lending in urban neighborhoods need not be charity: there's not only payoff from the loans but also from a more general economic renewal. South Shore has shown how successful community development banking can open up new opportunities for all banks.

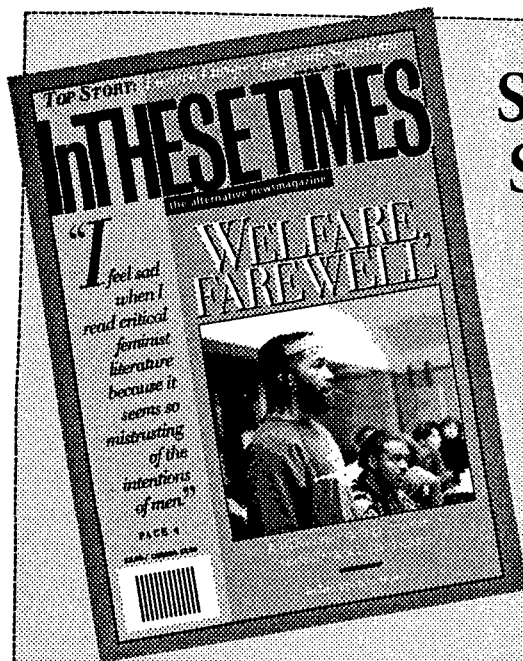
Nevertheless, some bankers oppose Clinton's anticipated legislation as unnecessary—a claim belied by their own sorry lending record. Others see it as a chance to grab some federal dollars or else to invest in development banks as a way of fulfilling their obligations to their service area under the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA). However, early drafts of the legislation channel the money to the limited number of financial institutions with an explicit commitment to community development in their charter. The legislation would give commercial banks some CRA credit for investing in development institutions, but such investments would not relieve their CRA-mandated responsibilities to their own communities.

In the long run, the big commercial banks have most of the money and the greatest potential to extend credit. Consequently, the Clinton administration appears ready to enforce the CRA more vigorously, moving away from formal paperwork requirements towards assessing actual performance. Although that would relieve bureaucratic overhead and tighten current lax enforcement of CRA standards, some bankers dread anything that they suspect will lead to government-mandated allocation of credit.

Community development strategists want the federal government to require disclosure of all business loans (not just mortgages, as now required). They also want community reinvestment rules to apply to all financial institutions. That would include the mutual funds and other entities that compete with banks for deposits but are not under the same social obligations. Shorebank officials argue that if commercial banks are to be granted the expanded powers they currently seek—such as the right to sell insurance—then they must first seriously pursue community development banking.

Community development banking, however, owes as much to community organizing as it does to banking, making big banks unlikely practitioners. "Yes, we make loans," observed South Shore Bank vice-president Jean Pogge, "but credit is not enough."

Ultimately, as Shorebank's founders recognized, development involves a social transformation as much as an economic revival. The bankers at South Shore have shown how a bank can be a sound financial institution as well as an active good neighbor of unfairly neglected blacks and local businesses, to the astonishment of bankers and borrowers alike. ◀



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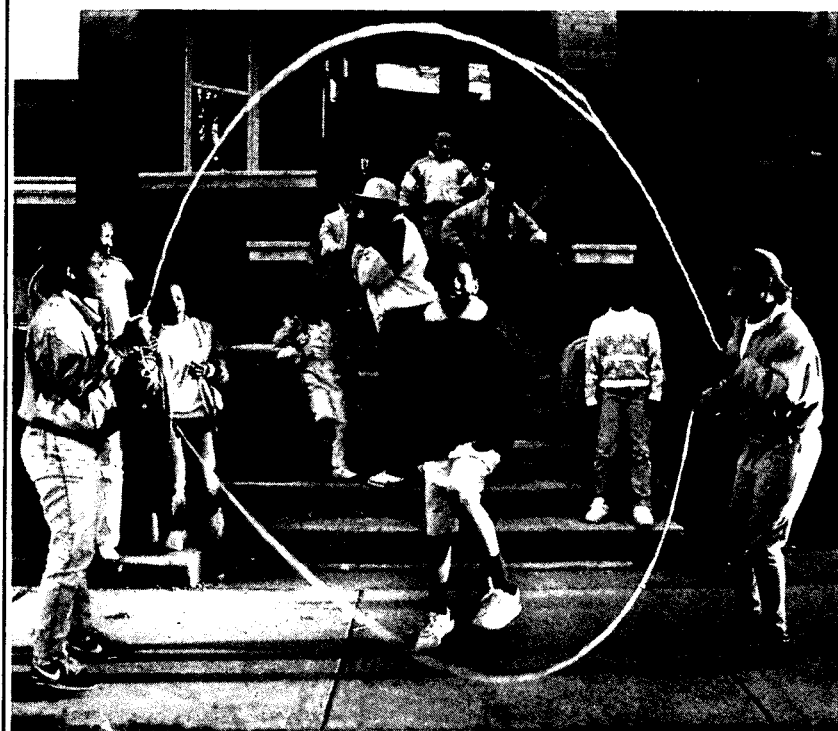
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LOS ANGELES

The death of urban liberalism?

T

he bump in the night was L.A. being thrown into reverse. The city's been coming apart for some time, of course, its white and upper-middle-class residents fleeing its common institutions—schools, parks and libraries. On June 8 they fled its distinctive politics—and it was the Bradley coalition's turn to crumble.

Richard Riordan's election signals the provisional breakup of the cross-town voting bloc assembled by Tom Bradley that linked the Westside to South-Central and East L.A., white to black to brown.

Is it an enduring turn rightward—and one that portends a rightward shift in other historically liberal cities? Certainly new urban coalitions are being hammered together across the U.S.: former police chief Frank Jordan, a center-

right candidate, dislodged liberal Art Agnos from San Francisco's mayor's office in 1991; and former federal prosecutor Rudolph Giuliani, a moderate Republican, may well oust New York Mayor David Dinkins later this year.

But it's a bit too early to write the obituaries for Democratic control of the cities. For one thing, L.A.'s new city council is actually more liberal than the old one. Not all urban liberalism is dying, although one particular strain of it, race-centered and largely non-economic, has ground to a halt. Mike Woo never figured that out, and paid the price for it.

For liberals, what's galling about the election result is that Woo's was a winnable race. What's consoling is that the man who has just purchased the mayoralty has not secured a lasting realignment. Riordan will succeed as mayor only by transforming himself into a LaGuardia Republican, fighting to preserve city services. But the more likely option is that he'll govern with a narrower business agenda.

Give credit where credit is due: Richard Riordan's campaign was a masterpiece of candidate concealment. Not until his elec-

tion-night victory talk did most Angelenos realize that their new mayor can't quite make a speech. Indeed, the city knows less about its new mayor than just about any figure who's been elected to a major office in years, which is as the Riordan campaign wanted it.

Over the past couple of weeks, amid a series of revelations about his arrest and drunk-driving record, the chief object of Riordan's handlers has been to keep him as far as possible from the press. As his public appearances concluded, Riordan would dart behind his aides who issued perfunctory apologies for the candidate's inability to answer questions. Painful though it must have been for Riordan, the death of his 101-year-old mother the week before the election enabled the campaign to take its strategy one step further and get the candidate out of town.

Riordan's campaign also capitalized on new finance reform that was intended to even out the candidates' war chests. Ironically, it had been Woo who had devised the city's ethics reform, which placed limits on fundraising and spending and made it impossible for Woo to keep up with Riordan in this year's campaign. Woo's reforms hadn't allowed for the contingency of a candidate giving himself \$6 million. Even then, Riordan might have been beaten—if Woo had had a message.

"What's the message?" I asked one of Mike Woo's campaign consultants about three and a half weeks before the election.

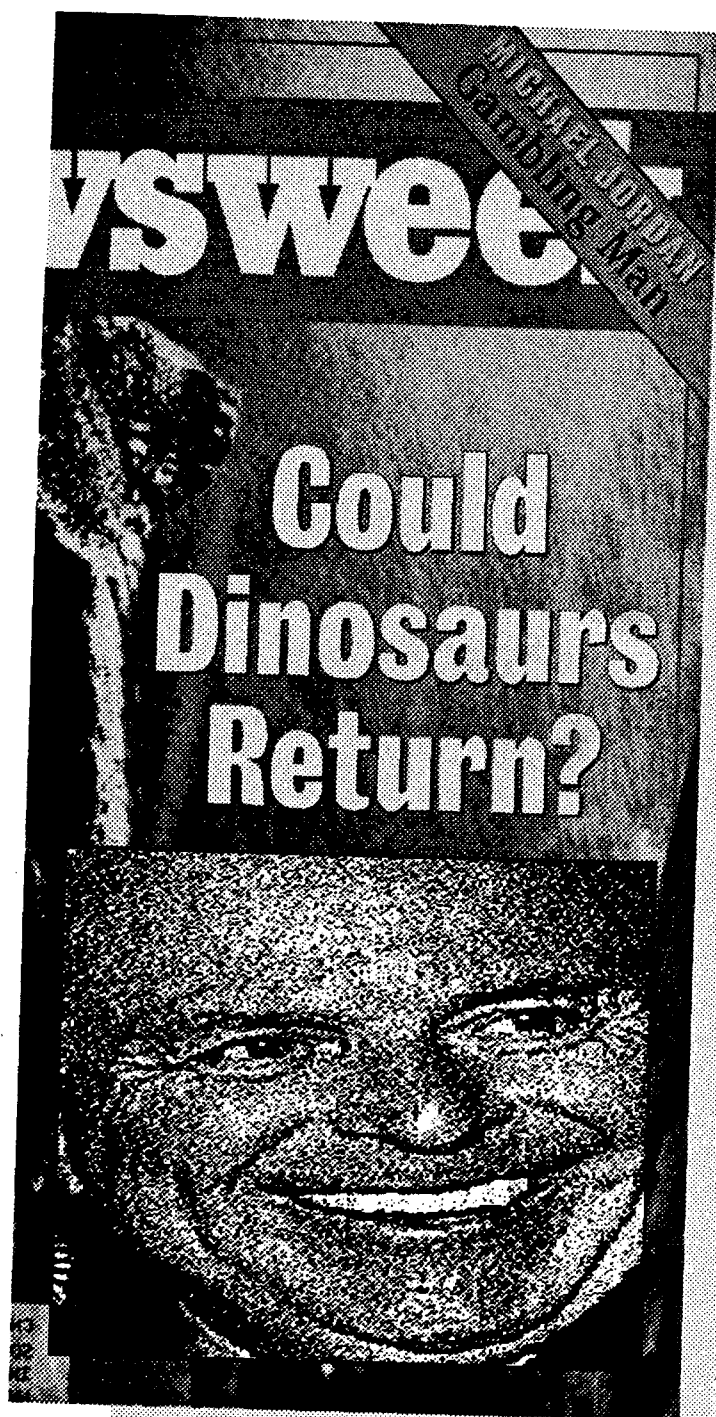
"The message is, 'Who is Riordan?'" the consultant answered.

"No," I tried again, "what's *your* message?"

"That is the message," the consultant repeated, appalled,

*The election of
Republican
Richard
Riordan
throws L.A.
politics into
reverse.*

By Harold Meyerson



I think, both at the message and my slowness in getting it.

And sure enough, that was the message. Asked in one of the debates for his philosophy of government, Woo responded with a laundry list of Riordan's flaws. When it came to a central theme, Woo had been running on empty since the primary.

When Tom Bradley first became mayor in 1973, a mayor could deliver on the economy. The cities controlled their own tax base. A mayor could direct the considerable resources flowing from Washington to the projects of his choice.

But by the time Mike Woo ran for mayor, the element of economic decision-making had largely been drained from the job. In 1978, control over local revenues shifted to Sacramento with the passage of Proposition 13. In 1981, Ronald Reagan greatly reduced federal aid to cities, and Bill Clinton has made a negligible effort to restore it. So Mike Woo was running as an urban liberal at a moment when urban liberalism had come to be identified chiefly with issues of race. Woo, the pitch went, would be better able to broker among groups, keep the peace, staff an administration that would be reflective of the city's diversity, and preside over a police force more respectful of that diversity. For liberals and many non-white voters, it was a compelling message. But for crucial swing constituencies, it articulated a politics that didn't address their deepest needs. To white middle-class Democrats of the San Fernando Valley, it offered a zero-sum reshuffling of the existing order. To the inner-city poor, and to the unemployed aerospace engineers of Northridge, it offered nothing in the way of improved job prospects.

Seeking to bolster turnout in the inner city without unduly alienating the moderate swing voters of more outlying areas, Woo never really grappled with the city's economic decline—and managed to cut down his vote among both groups.

Even among hardcore liberals who supported Woo's agenda, there was a palpable lack of enthusiasm. In November, the progressive precinct network, Coalition '92, fielded about 800 volunteers to get out the vote for Bill Clinton. But for this election, Coalition '93 fielded just 94 volunteers to spread the word for Mike Woo.

The alternative, of course, was to run as Clinton ran (something altogether distinct from governing as Clinton has governed)—as a champion of an investment economics distinct from the trickle-down and privatization panaceas of Richard Riordan. In fact, a couple of candidates had run primary campaigns with just those themes. Nick Patsouras talked about using the transit funding coming into L.A. to spin off a light-rail industry to fill the void left by the collapse of aerospace; Richard Katz suggested a joint public-private effort to manufacture electric cars. These were plausible jobs programs that spoke, like Clinton's campaign proposals, to the needs both of the inner city and the suburbs; they united the very constituencies split by the identity politics to which urban liberalism has generally been reduced. They were also plausible counters to Riordan's economics, which relied on the dubious hope that deregulation would entice corporations to reinvest in L.A. By shunning these policies, though, Woo left himself little option but to merely campaign as the multiculturalist—a prescription, in a city where a majority of voters are white, for a Democratic disaster.

It's always possible, of course, that Riordan will surprise the city and govern to the left of the way he's run. His closest adviser will likely be attorney William Wardlaw, a prominent center-right Democrat, and it's just possible that Wardlaw will counsel Riordan to make up the

Budget shortfall (likely to be in the sub-\$100 million range) by such populist actions as levying a city tax on banks and insurance companies or bucking the liquor lobby by enacting a nickel-a-drink tax in bars. But that would require Riordan to break his no-new-tax pledge, and there's not much grounds for hope that he will.

Ironically, while Riordan's election surely means a more conservative mayor, the June 8 vote also yielded a more liberal city council. Indeed, had Woo been elected, there would have been enough votes on the new council to remove conservative John Ferraro as council president.

Which is precisely why Ferraro campaigned so vituperatively against Woo: a Woo-Ferraro standoff would have produced a gridlock the council could not have tolerated. With Riordan elected, Ferraro can serve as the mayor's emissary to a not overly friendly council.

Riordan and Ferraro are quite a pair to be running the city. Both stuck by Daryl Gates until the last possible

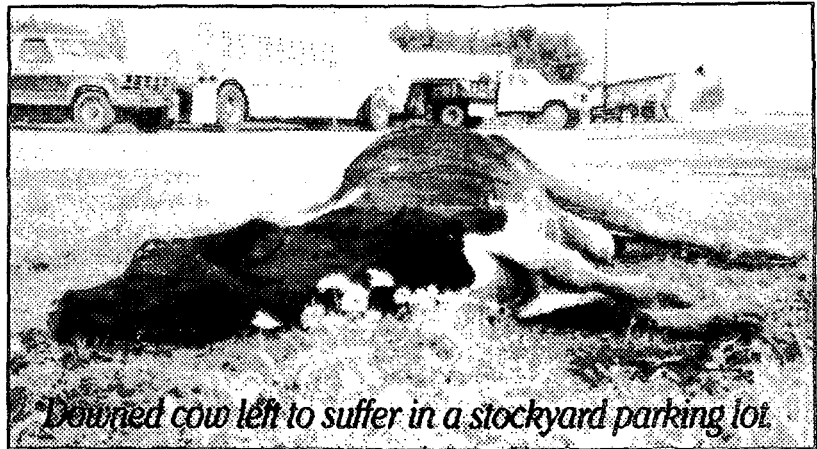
moment. Both are the products of '50s L.A. Both are creatures of that old bipartisan elite whose basic article of faith is that problems are best solved by the unannounced meetings of the right guys behind tightly closed doors.

"Could Dinosaurs Return?" a recent

issue of *Newsweek* asked on its cover. In L.A. they just have. With the election of Riordan as mayor and with Ferraro still atop the council, *Jurassic Park* came to town three days early.

Harold Meyerson is executive editor of the *L.A. Weekly*.

Dealing in Downers



After years of milk production, worn out and debilitated dairy cows are trucked to slaughter and killed for their meat. Sometimes, these cows are so sick they cannot even stand. The industry calls them "downed animals" or "downers".

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Glosario bilingüe

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caer de 0 to have just	integrista nm/f. reactionary
atacado nm. attack	por unanimidad 0
calentamiento nm. warming	unanimously
corriente nf. current; flow	pronunciar un discurso 0
detenido (detener) v. arrested	to deliver a speech
	supuesto/a adj. alleged
	surgir v. to appear
	Torres Gemelas 0 Twin Towers

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ERITREA

Birth pangs

A

new nation was born in Africa last month—Eritrea. With a little help it could become the continent's first genuine success story. So far, however, the Clinton administration has been painfully slow to react to this opportunity with more than symbolic gestures.

Throughout their 30-year war for independence, the Eritreans have been political mavericks.

By Dan Connell
ASMARA, ERITREA

Throughout their 30-year war for independence, the Eritreans have been political mavericks, refusing to be pigeon-holed by Cold War alliances and waging their bitter liberation struggle with little outside support. As they begin a bold effort to establish a postwar democracy on their own terms, they are finding the big powers—especially the U.S.—as reluctant as ever to back a nation they can't control.

The contested Red Sea territory became Africa's newest independent state in late May, after a U. N.-monitored referendum in April in which 99.8 percent of the voters—a remarkably

diverse ethnic and religious mix—opted to separate from Ethiopia. The unity of purpose displayed in the referendum is one of Eritrea's greatest assets as it joins the international community.

The Eritreans defeated the strongest and best-equipped armies ever assembled in black Africa, fighting largely with captured weapons and surviving mainly on contributions from their diaspora spread across North America, Europe and the Middle East. Now they are setting out to reconstruct their war- and drought-ravaged country, attempting to achieve basic food security and to become a hub for regional economic activity. Odds are they will do it.

While Eritrea's neighbors—Somalia, Sudan, Djibouti and Ethiopia—struggle with virulent strains of ethnic and religious extremism, this country brings together Christians and Muslims from nine ethnic groups in an original experiment in cultural and political pluralism.

The U.S. joined Italy, Sudan and Egypt in recognizing the new state when the referendum results were announced. Since then, Eritrea has been voted into the United Nations. Unfortunately, however, the U.S. has been extremely stingy with aid to Eritrea, and there is no sign that this will change.

Eritrean independence forces fought a bloody 30-year war against successive U.S.- and Soviet-backed Ethiopian regimes after Ethiopia annexed the former Italian colony in the early '60s. The Eritreans routed the Ethiopian Army in May 1991 and then helped Ethiopian opposition forces to bring down the Addis Ababa government. After taking power in their respective capitals, the two allied opposition movements signed a pact calling for a plebiscite on Eritrea's political status after a two-year transition period.

The importance of this plebiscite lay less in its outcome—which was widely predicted—than in the precedent it set for popular participation in elections.

The provisional government has pledged to convene a constituent assembly to adopt a constitution before holding multiparty national elections, but Eritrean leaders decline to set a precise timetable for the transition period.

"We have the task of institutionalizing democracy in this country," said Isaias Afwerki, Eritrea's new president, in an interview with *In These Times*. "If we wish to have a viable democracy, we have to create the proper institutions and guarantee the rule of law."

"We need to make this process participatory—and this will take time. We cannot for the sake of public relations make a statement about the time frame, but this is a purely technical question. There are no hidden agendas."

Prior to the referendum, the government convened elections throughout the country at the local level, often repeating them at three-month intervals in an effort to school citizens in

the exercise of the franchise. Elections were conducted by secret ballot and were hotly contested, but people ran as individuals. Contending parties are in Eritrea's future, according to the provisional government, but with restrictions and as the outcome of an extended developmental process.

"We do not see an alternative to a multiparty political system," said Isaias. "The question is how we formulate it."

The 42-year-old former guerrilla commander said that the government is likely to ban parties that arise from factions that engaged in armed actions against the Eritrean People's Liberation Front during the war with Ethiopia, as well as parties that base their appeal on ethnicity or religion. Foreign funding of political parties is also to be prohibited.

Meanwhile, the country is preoccupied with efforts to reconstruct its war-damaged infrastructure and to revive the drought-stricken rural economy. "Mainly, in this transitional period, we are engaged in emergency recovery and rehabilitation," said Haile Woldetensai, secretary of the new government's department of economic development and cooperation. "The first thing we want to reverse is that a majority of our people have become dependent on food aid."

The entire liberation army of 110,000 men and women—including the acting president—has stayed on without pay since the end of the war to join in national reconstruction, though it is not clear how much longer they will do so. Army

units in the capital protested what they thought were government calls to serve for the next four years without salaries by briefly seizing the airport and several downtown buildings at the end of May. The demonstration was peaceful, and the confrontation was resolved when Isaias met the

Over 400 Muslim women gather in Hagaz, Eritrea, to discuss women's roles in their new nation.

fighters and assured them that pay for them and their impoverished families would be forthcoming. Nevertheless, the action—the first of its kind in the history of the liberation struggle—sent a strong signal that fighters who have devoted a decade or more to the independence war are growing anxious to get on with their lives.

In the absence of cash, relief aid has also been used to support large-scale food-for-work projects by civilians, and thousands of young Eritreans have been called upon to perform up to two years of national service. Most of the country's meager resources have been directed at assisting small producers, in sharp contrast to the common Third World stress on costly large-scale enterprises serving the urban and export markets.

Last year, according to Agriculture Department head Tesfai Ghermazien, more than 25,000 miles of badly eroded hillsides were terraced, 22 million new trees planted, 15 microdams constructed and hundreds of miles of rural roads repaired. Good rains for the first time in a decade helped the Eritreans to more than quadruple the previous year's harvest, though this met only half the country's food needs.

Though Western diplomats laud the Eritreans for their hard work and the lack of any evident corruption, assistance in reconstructing the devastated country has been slow in coming. The U.S. failed to provide any development aid last year after talks broke down over extensive, humiliating "conditionalities."

The in-country representative of the U.S. Agency for International Development was subsequently withdrawn amid charges of arrogance and incompetence. However, Washington's insistence on strict timetables for privatization continues to undermine relations between the two countries. This year only \$6 million is earmarked for aid to Eritrea, according to U.S. diplomats here, and none is slated for 1994.

This is nowhere near enough. Democracy cannot take root and flourish in a structurally unstable environment. If the new government falters on the economic front, especially with the high expectations Eritreans now have of postwar prosperity, there is little doubt that extremists will seek to exploit ethnic and religious fault lines here to undermine this unusual experiment in secular democracy and social justice.

If the Clinton administration is at all serious about supporting democracy in the Third World and nurturing an alternative to religious and ethnic fundamentalism, Eritrea is the place to start.

◀ **Dan Connell** is the founder of the Boston-based aid agency Grassroots International and author of a new book, *Against All Odds: A Chronicle of the Eritrean Revolution* (Red Sea Press).



© Dan Connell/Grassroots International

VIEWPOINT

The end of Italy's kickback politics

By Marco d'Eramo

Over the last year and a half, hundreds of Italian government officials, party leaders and corporate officers have been charged with taking or offering bribes, stealing public money and a variety of other forms of corruption. Officials of all major parties, virtually every leading politician and scores of others are under investigation in what amounts to a decapitation of Italy's ruling class.

"Italy, corruption as usual," one might respond to this flood of political news from Rome, but that would be wrong. And while it is true that corruption has been common—even endemic—in Italy, this scandal runs deeper. For the first time, corrupt politicians, business leaders and others are being tried and sentenced.

Consider this: In the past year, the regime has collapsed, the rules of political decision-making have been changed and the relationship between the economy and politics has been radically upset—and all this has happened without a foreign invasion or a lost war. In short, Italy has been going through a revolution.

But what a strange revolution: without revolutionaries, without insurgents, without barricades in the streets or a takeover by the army.

This is a revolution with losers but without winners. None of the traditional left forces is present. And, in fact, it is neither a leftist nor a rightist revolution—so far.

Indeed, the present Italian dynamic resembles recent events in former East bloc countries, and not merely because of the universal corruption. Here, like there, the regimes crumbled from the inside. The old powers were defeated, but no new powers have emerged.

The tool of this political change is the magistracy. So far, 2,600 politicians and managers have been subpoenaed. Judges have investigated more than 400 mayors and councilors of Italy's largest cities. One-third of Italian congressmen are under investigation and have been stripped of their parliamentary immunity. Accused by

The end of the Cold War has precipitated a revolution in Italy similar to those in Eastern Europe.

the judges, ministers of eight departments in the last cabinet had to resign. Four former Italian prime ministers—Christian Democrats Giulio Andreotti, Ciriaco De Mita and Arnaldo Forlani, as well as Socialist Bettino Craxi—have also been charged, and top managers of several huge state-owned holdings, as well as those of several large private corporations, including Fiat and Ferruzzi, are also under investigation. Together with their leaders, the political parties have also been wounded, causing the whole party-based regime to collapse.

Since World War II, Italy has been governed by 52 cabinets, each one averaging a span of only 11 months and 10 days. This is what gave rise to the almost universal misconception that the First Republic was feverishly unstable. But along with Japan, Italy has had the most stable political system in the world for almost five decades. The personnel may have changed, but the Christian Democrats (DC) remained the dominant presence in government.

The political system was locked up because of the Cold War and because Italy was, geographically, a border country facing the Eastern bloc and, politically, a frontier system with the strongest Communist Party in the West.

The end of the Cold War and dissolution of the Communist Party removed the political blockade, making Christian Democratic power unnecessary for the maintenance of the world balance of power.

Furthermore, in April Italians voted to change the rules governing political representation, moving Italy toward a British-style system of majority rule. For 45 years Italian electoral law was based on a system of proportional representation: when 1.5 percent voted for a small party, it got nine seats in the 600-member Congress. That system was created in 1947 in order to avoid a repeat of the

one-party control of the fascist years. So the DC had to forge complicated alliances with the Socialists (PSI) and numerous small centrist parties. These coalitions were the cause of cabinet instability, as each party vied for more power within the coalition.

Changing the electoral law will dramatically alter the political landscape and the form of politics. Environmentalists, leftists, radicals and Communists are all now threatened with the loss of their representation in Congress.

Italy has changed more in the last 45 years than in previous centuries. In 1950 Italy was a rural country where 50 percent of the labor force worked in agriculture. Now, Italian politicians proudly boast that Italy is the "fifth-largest economic power in the world." This is the rhetoric of the new rich, Italians who like to flaunt the dramatic improvement in their living standards. And their attitude also has affected the political attitudes of the nation's voters. Over the past decade they have feared losing their new wealth. Thus, the Italians voted for change and for the Communists as long as they were sure that the Christian Democrats were securely in power, but when Communist victory seemed possible, the majority came back to the conservatives. They wanted to correct, but not upset, a system that had made them (or the majority of them) rich. So the political system was locked up not only by the Cold War but also by the economic boom.

Many factors contributed to the boom: the loss of World War II and the necessity of reconstruction on a scale similar to that of Japan and Germany; the Marshall Plan of 1948 and American economic aid; the Cold War and the need to finance an economically strong anti-communist shield; the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC), which provided a large European market for Italy's cheap products—small Fiat cars, refrigerators and washing machines; and the pugnacity and strength of the organized Italian working class. In addition, the "demochristian" model

of development—a strange mixture of Keynesian policies, supply-side economics and corruption—stimulated the economy for many years.

The DC created demand through public works inefficiency. Every bureaucratic project required more employees than were needed. Superfluous state employees put money in circulation and offered political advantages well known to American urban political machines.

Then there was the peculiar Italian version of supply-side economics: the tax rate stayed high, but massive tax evasion was routine for small businesses, professionals and other self-employed workers. A few years ago, the Italian Bureau of Census calculated that more than one-third of GNP income was not declared. Similarly, half of all Italian houses still are not recorded in the land registry office, so millions of homeowners pay no taxes on rent they collect.

Finally, there were public works projects, like the seven-mile tunnel under Mount Gransasso in the Appennini region. This project cost billions—as much as the tunnel under the English Channel—but it connects only two small towns.

This economic policy had other strong advantages. The ability to choose contractors gave the government the power to blackmail them. Those who didn't pay bribes (deposited in Swiss bank accounts) were never chosen as contractors. This practice is the main charge in present corruption trials. It existed at every level of Italian society, from the street cop to the central department secretary responsible for the building of big dams. At the lower levels of administration, bribes provided normal supplementary income to low-paid state workers. At the higher levels, bribes were the main way of financing the political machine.

Most of the investigated politicians are thieves, but it's true that many robbed for the party, not for personal benefit. This, of course, only made things worse, because it became the normal way of life for

Italian society, which is why the entire political class is now on trial.

Still, the system worked for 45 years. Capital received generous aid and was protected from foreign competition, farmers cashed in on EEC aid, professionals benefited from tax evasion, contractors were abundantly fed and millions of state employees were guaranteed lifetime jobs.

The bill for this general abundance was paid by the state. As long as the economy boomed, state spending was an advance on the wealth that followed. But when the economy slowed down after 1973, state spending became state deficit. And to cover the deficit created by tax evasion, the state had to borrow from the tax evaders (this explains why Italy has the highest savings rate in the West—the Italian state debt is greater than the country's GNP).

The problem now is that three-fourths of the state deficit goes to servicing the debt, so there is no room to expand state spending. Meanwhile, the new phase of European unification forbids Italian monetary authorities to increase debt.

Thus the model of development achieved its goal, but the party became obsolete in the process.

In the late '80s, Italy was ready for radical change, but the Cold War prevented it. But when the Berlin Wall fell, the mummified political system collapsed. The first step came in 1989 when the Communist Party changed its name to the Democratic Party of the Left. The second was in last year's general election, which saw the PSI and the DC decline in favor of the federalist Northern League. And now the structural relationship between economic and political powers is being dismantled.

Italians can tolerate illegality, but they can no longer tolerate chronic uncertainty. Lawfulness is now the revolutionary issue, which is why judges are revolutionaries—and why this is neither a left-wing nor a right-wing revolution. ◀

Marco d'Eramo is a correspondent for the Italian daily newspaper *Il Manifesto*.

I N T H E A R T S

Real man-eaters

N

o unauthorized breeding takes place in Jurassic Park," says one of the disposable characters (an Asian-American biogenetics whiz) in Steven Spielberg's designated summer blockbuster about the ultimate amusement park. The emphasis here is on "unauthorized," since breeding is topic A in both the human and the dinosaur plots of *Jurassic Park*.

The real stars of the movie are dinosaurs cloned from prehistoric DNA, which is found in amber-preserved mosquitoes of the Jurassic and Cretaceous ages. These creatures have all been carefully bio-engineered as female so that they will not breed. (One curious effect of this in the movie is that whenever there's carnage to be assessed, the human characters chatter on about the perpetrator as "she," or as the great white hunter who heads security says, "old girl." At last, female action stars.)

Females, it turns out, are easier to manufacture, since

"all embryos start out as female." The gene-splicers of Jurassic Park just deny their recreations that little something extra in anatomy and thus ensure the dino population remains manageable, if not exactly docile. Or so they think. As one skeptical observer warns John Hammond (Richard Attenborough), the Barnum of this freak show, "Life will find a way."

But you don't think you're going to *Jurassic Park* just to watch dinosaurs roam the earth, do you? You're also going to be forced a large dose of that popular cure-all, family values, dispensed through the puny humans who find themselves munched, clawed, sniffed, chased and (like the audience) pretty much reduced to quivering jelly by such specimens as *Tyrannosaurus rex* and *Velociraptor mongoliensis*. Humans, too, face a genetic imperative in *Jurassic Park*.

Even before our hero, paleontologist Alan Grant (Sam Neill), gets to the park, which is located on an island off the coast of Central America (site of so many American experiments in the politics and commerce of repression), we know exactly what the personal stakes are. First glimpsed at his Montana digs, Grant is already beset with little monsters—know-it-all, cynical children, full of messy, obnoxious energy. "You want one of *those*?" he says incredulously to girlfriend Ellie Sattler (Laura Dern), whose biological clock appears to be ticking.

Sattler and Grant are soon enticed to join a little group of consultants brought in to inspect Jurassic Park on the order of Hammond's Japanese investors, who are worried it isn't safe (after all, they know from *Godzilla*). Also along for the ride are a lawyer (dead meat, anyone?), a chaos theoretician (played by Jeff Goldblum as a punk moralist), and two cute kids.

These adorables, a dino-dedicated boy and a computer-literate girl who pragmatically divides the park's wildlife into "veggie-sauruses" and "meatosauruses," will, of course, depend on the kidphobic Alan Grant to keep them alive when the special effects rev up.

These are, as touted everywhere, astounding, groundbreaking effects, not to be missed by anyone who's ever enjoyed a monster movie. Spielberg doesn't simply put them on display, but uses them expertly to construct sheer terror. You will feel like

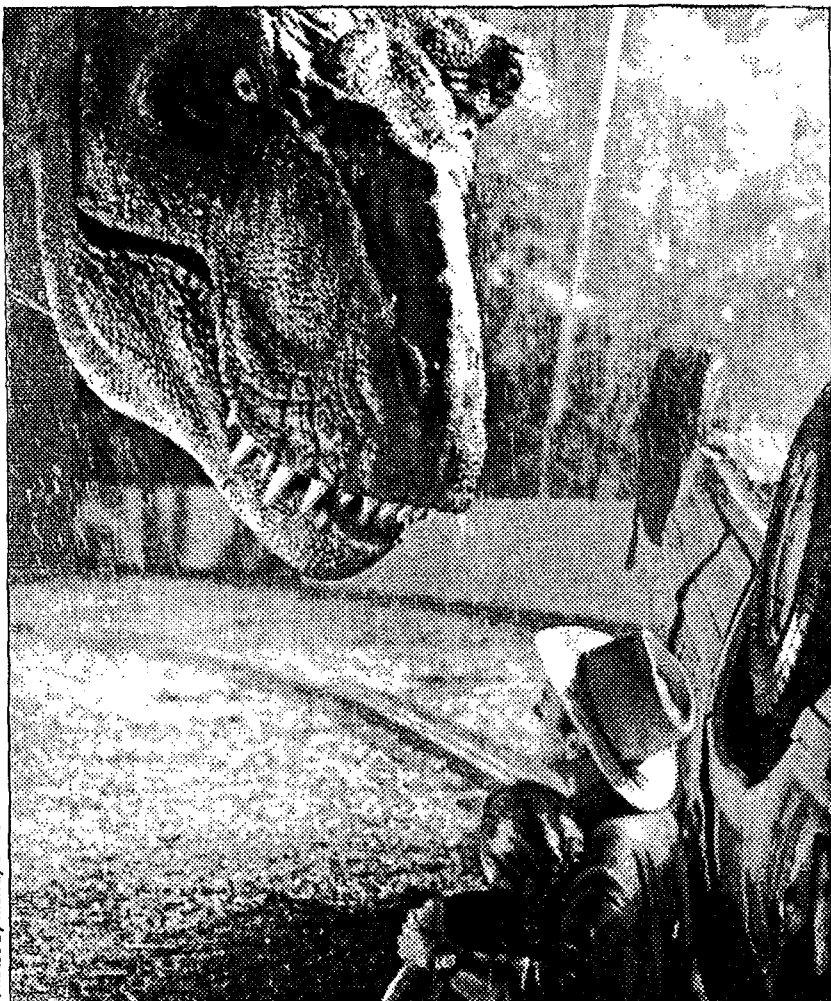


Jurassic Park
Directed by Steven Spielberg

In Jurassic Park, prehistoric sisters are doing it for themselves. Somebody better stop them before it's too late.

By Pat Dowell

Photos by Murray Close



dinosaur prey, and feel it most effectively if you go to a theater with a digital sound system. According to *Omni* magazine, more money was spent on recreating these dinosaurs than on funding all scientific research on dinosaurs undertaken to date.

As the compleat consumer, you'll also appreciate the moment in the movie when the camera pans knowingly over the Jurassic Park goodies for sale in the park lodge (and, needless to say, Toys R Us). And, when one of the guys being chased by T. rex gasps, "Will this be on the tour?" you can bet the answer is yes. Universal reportedly considered building a film set as a park that could open simultaneously with the movie. But apparently they're going to settle for an attraction on the Universal Studio Tour. The ideal moviegoer for *Jurassic Park* is just as surely engineered as the dinosaurs.

The moviegoer may justifiably feel a bit like a tiny screw in a huge entertainment engine, but then so are the human characters in the movie. Let's be generous and say that Spielberg was preoccupied with the monsters (and with his next movie bid for critical respect, *Schindler's List*, shooting while this was in postproduction). Perhaps that explains the moronic shorthand with which the people and plot are sketched in *Jurassic Park*. The eagerness of the scriptwriters (novelist Michael Crichton and rewrite specialist David Koepp) to cob-

ble together a surrogate family is Spielberg mythology at its baldest and least imaginative—and it's not a part of Crichton's novel.

Luxuriant subtext, both sexual and political, is a long and venerable tradition of monster movies. The old-world, aristocratic shibboleths of Count Dracula and Baron Frankenstein menaced peaceful burghers and huddled masses during the Depression, at a time when most Americans felt the economic life being drained out of them. Was there ever a more Forgotten Man than the Baron's Monster?

There was an obvious political dimension as well to the atomic paranoia of such postwar classics as *Them*, with giant ants mutated through nuclear testing, and *The Thing*, with its merciless alien and its Cold War and isolationist refrains, "Close the door!" and "Keep watching the skies!" And all these creatures, no matter their origin, were true monsters from the id, in the nomenclature of Freud and *Forbidden Planet*. With them returned our most basic instincts.

Now that we're in an age when reproduction is a voting issue—mostly because some voters don't, or don't want to reproduce on command—comes a monster movie in awe of unbridled genetic power. So fiercely procreative are the sexlessly created dinosaurs that some of them change gender (faulty family planning by their human keepers). The lesson is not lost on the recalcitrant human Alan Grant, whose paternal

instincts are massaged by physical danger. In this case, the return of the repressed means a regression into fundamentalist patriarchy.

Gone is the novel's provocative undertone of distrust toward the culture of science. In the book, Jurassic Park was a disaster already happening. But in the movie, a disgruntled employee is the sole saboteur. Just a vestigial trace of Crichton's unease remains, in the cryptic comments of chaos theoretician Ian Malcolm (Goldblum).

"Discovery is a penetrative act," says Malcolm in movie and book, setting up the story's battle of the sexes between man and his virgin clones.

Malcolm adds that Jurassic Park's scientists have attained an awesome power without discipline. But he goes further in the book. "You know what's wrong with scientific power?" he chides. "It's a form of inherited wealth. And you know what assholes congenitally rich people are. It never fails."

Malcolm calls the geneticists and computer scientists who designed Jurassic Park "thintelligent." They are technicians and specialists without perspective or wisdom, which might be said as well of those who created *Jurassic Park*. And he has a remedy for their rampages. "Get rid of the thintelligent ones. Take them out of power." You won't hear that in the movie, although the dinosaurs seem to have gotten the message. ◀

IN PRINT

Rethinking Ethel Rosenberg

By James Weinstein

On June 19, 1953, at 8:11 in the evening, Ethel Rosenberg was put to death in the electric chair; minutes earlier her husband Julius had met the same fate. Traumatized by this savage act, millions of people throughout the world demonstrated against the American government. In Paris posters portrayed President Eisenhower with a smile on his face and electric chairs in his teeth. In New York thousands gathered in Union Square, hoping for a last-minute reprieve for the young couple.

At first, when Julius was arrested, no one gave a second thought to Ethel. And until the recent publication of Ilene Philipson's *Ethel Rosenberg: Beyond the Myths*, even those sympathetic to the Rosenbergs considered Ethel as something of an afterthought.

She had been an active unionist and a Communist Party stalwart until her first child was born in 1943. Then, with Julius traveling for his job as an inspector with the Army Signal Corps, she quit work and dropped out of political activity to become a full-time housewife and mother. But two days after Julius was arrested, FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover wrote to the U.S. attorney general that "proceeding against his wife might serve as a lever" to make Julius "furnish the details of his extensive espionage activities."

Three weeks later, Ethel was taken into custody and the FBI began a campaign to induce David Greenglass and his wife Ruth to implicate her. Meanwhile, in prison, Ethel steadfastly insisted on her innocence and refused to save herself by testifying against her husband. Yet until the moment of her execution, the FBI was unsure of her involvement and the U.S. attorney considered her primarily as a hostage for Julius' confession.

The two were ultimately convicted of a crime that presiding judge Irving Kaufman said was "worse than murder." In 1949, only four years after the United States dropped the first atomic atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the Russians detonated their own nuclear

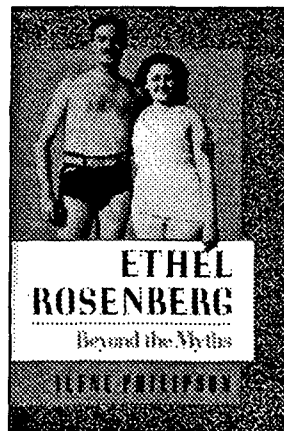
weapon. The crime the Rosenbergs were said to have committed was passing the "secret" of this bomb to our then-ally, now-Cold-War nemesis.

But there was no secret. The Russians had their own nuclear project, and every knowledgeable scientist knew it was only a matter of time before they, too, would make a bomb. Indeed, a majority of leading American nuclear physicists argued in 1945 that the U.S. and Britain should pool their knowledge with the Soviets in order to prevent a nuclear arms race. And one of them, Klaus Fuchs, who had worked on the bomb at Los Alamos, did pass everything he knew about the process to the Soviets. Arrested in Britain shortly after the Russians exploded their bomb, he confessed to espionage and was sentenced to 14 years in jail—the maximum sentence under British law for passing secrets to an ally in wartime.

When Julius Rosenberg was arrested, the Truman administration knew that he had little or nothing to do with the Soviets' success in producing their own bomb. But by 1950 the Cold War dominated American politics, and the Democrats were on the defensive, since they had been the party in office during the years of the wartime alliance with the Soviets. Desperate to avoid blame for being soft on Communism, and sharing the popular belief in American technological superiority, politicians and the media insisted that the Soviets could never have produced so complex a bomb without the help of disloyal Americans.

To find the presumed atom spies, the FBI launched the most intensive investigation in its history. First, they found Fuchs' accomplice, a Philadelphia chemist named Harry Gold, who led them to David Greenglass, an army machinist stationed at Los Alamos. And Greenglass led them to his brother-in-law Julius Rosenberg, an engineer who had been discharged from his job with the Signal Corps because he was a Communist. Greenglass told the FBI that Julius had arranged for him to meet with Fuchs' admitted accomplice Harry Gold, first to pass along information about the Los Alamos installation and then to provide drawings of an implosion lens used for detonating atomic explosions.

That was 40 years ago. Ever since, some on the left, especially those who had been in or near the Communist Party, have insisted that both Julius and Ethel were totally innocent victims. Others, like myself, while agreeing that both were sacrificed by a government intent on bolstering Cold War hysteria, believe that Julius had been involved in gath-



**Ethel Rosenberg:
Beyond the Myths**
By Ilene Philipson
Rutgers University Press
390 pp., \$14.95

The Unquiet Death of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg



ering industrial information for the Soviet Union, and probably was guilty of encouraging and helping Greenglass in his efforts to pass on atom bomb secrets.

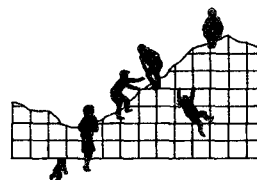
Ilene Philipson wisely avoids the debate about the Rosenbergs' guilt or innocence. Instead, as she writes in the introduction to her book, she has chosen to place the case in the background and Ethel's experience of it in the foreground. "By exploring her background, her motivations, her values and needs," Philipson writes, "we all may come to know 'the case' and its historical environment more fully."

What emerges is a portrait of a woman who was perceived in wildly different ways by those on both sides of the case. President Eisenhower, misled by her appearance of unflinching stoicism, said she had "obviously been the leader in everything [the Rosenbergs] did in the spy ring." Yet, while she believed deeply that capitalism was an unjust form of society and looked to the Soviet Union as a better, more humane model, she was also a woman of her time. As Philipson tells us, she "cried herself to sleep every night while in prison, considered *Parents' Magazine* to be her favorite periodical, and was in psychotherapy four times a week"—at a time when to be in therapy was cause for expulsion from the party.

Except for one summer, Philipson notes, "this master spy never lived more than five miles from the [Lower East Side] tenement where she was born, nor traveled further from New York than New Jersey." In short, in most respects Ethel was a very ordinary second-generation Jewish-American woman. And yet she was capable of extraordinary courage, self-discipline and adherence to her principles.

Philipson never says so directly, but her book is as much a

study of gender as it is of the Rosenberg case. It is a moving examination of the ways, especially in the days before the emergence of the modern women's movement, in which women were denied their full humanity by comrades and enemies alike. ▲



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Northern exposure

By Ilan Stavans

Numerous writers from the United States have used Latin America as a backdrop for stories of lust, despair and political turmoil—from Harriet Doerr's *Stones for Ibarra* to Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. The result is intriguing, the tale of disoriented Anglo-Saxons trying to decipher the Hispanic labyrinth, ultimately finding themselves trapped in its architecture. The list of South Americans writing novels and tales about the so-called *el Coloso del Norte*, the intimidating neighbor across the Rio Grande, is considerably shorter and also less exciting. I can only come up with a couple of examples: a few stories by Carlos Fuentes, a disappointing novel by Manuel Puig about New York, a few stories by Cubans Antonio Benitez-Rojo and Reinaldo Arenas—not much more. It's not clear why: when it comes to essays and poetry, the United States is at the very heart of the Hispanic imagination.

Isabel Allende's *The Infinite Plan*, published in Spanish at the end of 1991 and just recently issued in translation, needs now to be added to that short list of narratives that deliberately explore the reality north of the Rio Grande through a Hispanic lens. Born in Peru in 1942, Allende was exiled with her family in Venezuela after her uncle Salvador Allende was deposed as Chile's elected president by a coup d'état orchestrated by Gen. Augusto Pinochet. It was in Caracas, at the age of 36, that the housewife and journalist began writing what would become her hit debut, *The House of the Spirits*, about three generations of Chilean women obsessed with memory, violence and survival.

More than a decade later, Allende is living in California

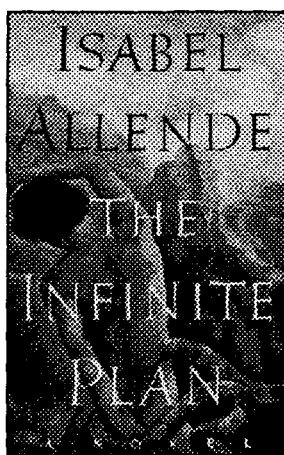
with her second husband, William C. Gordon, an American lawyer. Her new home far away from home is the setting of *The Infinite Plan*. In its reliance on stereotypes, the novel—Allende's fifth and perhaps her least memorable—will no doubt be perceived by the U.S. reader as simplistic. The book tells the story of Gregory Reeves, the son of an Australian tent preacher who wanders around the country in the company of two Russian-Jewish women and his two children, who finally settles and grows up in a Los Angeles barrio—bicultural and bilingual, fluent in Spanish and English.

Reeves embodies in his own story almost all of the crucial events in the United States in the years since World War II. He has friendships and love affairs with Chicanas in California, suffers reverse discrimination, becomes a success story at school, goes to Vietnam, and ultimately becomes a yuppie lawyer with a hyperactive son and a drug-addicted daughter. Reeves in the end becomes a symbol of the U.S. in the '80s, suffering, like the country itself, from workaholicism, an overabundance of material goods and a convoluted emotional life.

The novel reflects the ways the American dream is understood, and misunderstood, abroad, especially south of the Rio Grande. Allende doesn't connect with her material; the book is mechanistic and emotionally detached, a cartoonish parade of Americana, ranging from racial discrimination to incest, sexual abuse, political intolerance and inter-ethnic problems (known lately as "culture wars"). The result is like watching *I Love Lucy* in Buenos Aires: it seems anachronistic, unauthentic and strangely humorous. Abandoning the central themes of *The House of the Spirits* and her two Eva Luna volumes, Allende sets forth in a new direction—away from magic realism, the popular style of the Caribbean and South America made famous by Gabriel García Márquez, which she implies has become repetitive and unimaginative. Since an altogether different Hispanic reality has infiltrated Anglo-Saxon culture and is flourishing in the U.S., the best and most appealing place for Spanish-speaking writers to set their plots today is Latinoland—chronicling the ups and downs of Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Cubans north of the border.

Allende is a writer clearly in control of her narrative, but that's not enough. When compared to the works of Rudolfo A. Anaya, Cristina Garcia, Oscar Hijuelos and other U.S. Latinos, *The Infinite Plan* emerges as the work of an outsider. Unbalanced and plagued by a baroque and nervous prose that overwhelms the reader, the novel is an unremarkable addition to the minimal list of Latin American novels that take the United States as their theater. I hope more convincing titles will be added soon.

Ilán Stavans, a Mexican novelist and critic, teaches at Amherst College. He is co-editor of *Growing Up Latino: Memoirs and Stories* (Houghton Mifflin). His books *Tropical Synagogues* (Holmes & Meier), an anthology of stories by Jewish-Latin American writers, and *The Stranger Within* (HarperCollins), on Hispanic culture in the United States, are forthcoming.



The Infinite Plan
By Isabel Allende
Translated by
Margaret Sayers Peden
HarperCollins
382 pp., \$23

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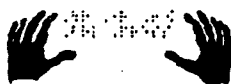
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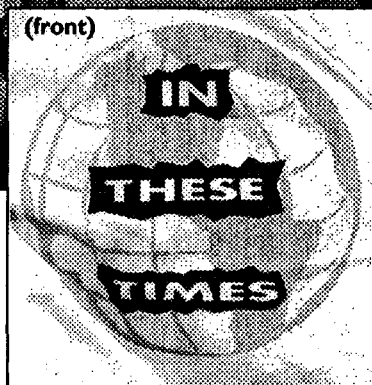
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IN THE END

Gergenmania!

By David Futrelle

The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, May 28, 1994:

"Hello. I'm Treasury Secretary Robert MacNeil."

"And I'm Supreme Court Justice Judy Woodruff. Jim Lehrer is off tonight, negotiating an end to the war in Macedonia. Our top story tonight concerns the remarkable change in the political fortunes of the Clinton administration in the year since David Gergen left our show for the White House. A year ago, you may remember, the presidency was in shambles. But now Clinton is riding high in the polls, by common consent the most beloved president in history. What accounts for this remarkable transformation? For insight into this issue, we turn to special White House correspondent Chelsea Clinton...."

Really, Bill—why stop with David Gergen? There are lots of government positions out there, and lots of television news personalities who'd love to have them, especially if they could keep their old jobs on the side.

Ted Koppel would probably hold out for secretary of state. But most of his colleagues, I suspect, are so jealous for access that they would take whatever you gave them. Hell, someone like Chris Wallace would be happy if he could just mow the White House lawn. You could give him a fancy title—the assistant undersecretary of the interior for executive lawn maintenance, or something—and he'd be rolling in the clover, as it were. George Will would consider the job of ambassador to England to be utterly boffo, and Peter Jennings would make a perfect ambassador to Canada. (Since he's Canadian, he'd think it was an important job.) And if Hillary doesn't work out, and Maury doesn't mind, you could always make Connie Chung the First Lady.

But why limit yourself to the traditional news personalities? That Michael Jordan fellow seems to be pretty popular—except perhaps in Phoenix—so why not appoint *him* to be assistant attorney general for civil rights? I'm sure he hasn't written anything objectionable, aside, perhaps, from a few gambling IOUs. And with all his surgical experience, Michael Jackson would make a terrific surgeon general; he'd look great with all those epaulets and medals and all, and maybe he could find a cure for that skin condition of his. Cher would work well as secretary of defense—you remember how well she got along with those sailors in that video of hers.

And since this is the Year of the Dinosaur, why not appoint the lovable Barney (the Dinosaur, that is, not Barney Frank) as a kind of goodwill ambassador to the world? The kids love him. I'm sure he'd do wonders in the Balkans—"I love you/You love me/Regardless of/Nationality."

I'm not sure what to do with Rush Limbaugh. Maybe—if you could find a rocket big enough—he could lead the McLaughlin Group on a manned mission to Mars. You could call the ship "Challenger II."

The possibilities are, like Limbaugh's belt, nearly endless.

